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THE YOUTH OF METHODISM.

THE
YOUTH OF METHODISM:

Their Privileges, Responsibilities,
Duties, and Prospects.

BY THE
REV. THORNLEY SMITH,
AUTHOR OF "THE HISTORY OF JOSEPH," ETC., ETC.

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P R E F A C E.

METHODISM possesses in its schools and congregations large numbers of children and young people, many of whom are the descendants of its earliest disciples, and all of whom are objects of great interest and solicitude. For them, in particular, this volume is designed; and it addresses them on their privileges, responsibilities, duties, and prospects, and seeks to impress upon their minds truths and principles of practical utility. In no sectarian spirit, however, has it been conceived; for whilst the author admires and loves the community with which he is associated, he sees much to admire and love in some other communities also. But he believes it to be the duty of Christian ministers and of Christian Churches, to take special care of their own youth; and he is anxious that those of his denomination should be kept within its fold, and trained in it for heaven and for God.

Many of the topics here dwelt upon he had often pondered, when an esteemed friend, greatly interested in the rising generation, suggested the title of the work, and urged him to commence it. The result of his efforts is now before the reader; and he commends these pages to the parents, teachers, and friends of Wesleyan youth, with the hope that they will deem them worthy of their attention, and of the attention of the young committed to their care. They have not been written without much anxiety, thought, and prayer; but if they should meet with acceptance, and be rendered, by the Divine blessing, useful to any, the author will have all the reward he seeks.

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PART THE FIRST.

The Privileges of the Youth of Methodism.

"OUR RELIGIOUS PRIVILEGES ARE NOT TO BE THOUGHT OF TRIFLING IMPORTANCE BECAUSE THEY DO NOT PRODUCE THEIR FULL EFFECT. THEY CANNOT BE A SUBSTITUTE FOR PERSONAL HOLINESS ; THEY CANNOT EXCUSE VICE ; BUT MAN'S INGRATITUDE DOES NOT CANCEL HIS OBLIGATIONS ; NOR DOES THE ABUSE OF PRIVILEGES DESTROY THEIR VALUE."—*Rev. R. Watson.*

SECTION I.

THE PRIVILEGES OF HOME.

"Sweet is the smile of home, the mutual look,
Where hearts are of each other sure ;
Sweet all the joys that crowd the household nook,
The haunt of all affections pure."—KEBLE.

THERE are few words more pleasant to the ear of man than the monosyllable, *home*. Who does not love the place so called, and who has not said, when distant from it, even among scenes the most lovely that nature can present, or in palaces the most gorgeous that art can rear, "there is no place in the world like home?" The poor man loves his home, though it is but a cottage in the wilderness, as much as the nobleman loves his who dwells in the stately hall; and scarcely would the poor man make an exchange with the nobleman, for to him the stately hall would not seem like home, and would, therefore, possess but few attractions, notwithstanding all its splendours.

But are all homes, then, alike? Is home, *home* everywhere, the wide world round? God's providence, doubtless, intended it so to be; but, alas, there are whole nations who know little of its comforts, and there are families, not a few, even in our own happy land, who taste its sweets but seldom, if at all. What does the squalid Bushman, or the wandering Arab, or the effemi-

nate Hindoo, know of the happiness of home ; or what do those English families know of its happiness, who are addicted to intemperance and vice, and among whom is heard the din of strife, or the loud clamour of angry and malicious words? You may go to many a spot called home, perhaps, in the very street in which you live, and find it most unhomely,—a spot which you would be willing to exchange for a prison, if there you could have quietness and rest. How sad that there should be such homes in a land where social life might be sanctified by religion, and where the contrasts which present themselves are so remarkable! When shall every English home be happy, and every English family a family of peace and love?

Nothing can make home happy but religion. If religion takes up her abode in a family, their home, whether it is a palace or a cottage, a mansion or an attic, becomes a little heaven on earth, where human hearts are knit together by the sweetest bonds, and where every relationship is sanctified by the smile of Him who “loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.”

Now many of the young to whom these pages are addressed possess homes of this kind. Their parents are persons who fear and love God, and who, like the patriarch Abraham, endeavour to “command their children and their households after them,” that they may “keep the way of the Lord ;” or they are like the mother of John Wesley, of whom it is said that she took great pains to instruct her children from their earliest years, and that on account of John’s providential escape from fire, when the parsonage house was burnt, she felt that she was under a special obligation “to be more particularly careful of the soul of a child whom God had so mercifully provided

for." Hence their habitations are "sanctified by the Word of God and prayer." From the altar of their dwellings arises, morning and evening, the incense of praise and of supplication; and often are the sacred oracles laid open on the table, and read in the hearing of the assembled circle. In their families dancing, card-playing, and all foolish and hurtful conversation are forbidden, and such recreations only are allowed as will conduce to the healthful play of the intellectual and moral faculties of the soul.

Is this a true description of your home? Then yours is a home indeed. Perhaps it is one of poverty and privation; for we hope that this little work will be put into the hands of the children of the poor; but, though the sun of worldly prosperity may not shine upon your dwelling, the sun of righteousness will shine upon it, and if so there will be privileges connected with it which many of the children of our nobility might envy. But perhaps it is a home of considerable comfort, or even one of comparative affluence and wealth. For though Wesleyan Methodism has been specially a mission to the poor, many in the middle, and some in the higher circles of society, rejoice to stand connected with it as a branch of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ; and in these cases the privileges of home are of a very superior character. There are Wesleyan families not a few, in every part of the land, where home-advantages are of such a kind as not to be exceeded in any religious families throughout the world.

Of these home-privileges, youthful reader, we would affectionately remind you. When first you drew your breath a tender mother and a loving father lifted up their hearts to God and prayed that you might become his child; ere many weeks had passed away you were

given to the Lord Jesus in the solemn rite of baptism ; and as soon as your infant lips could talk you were taught to put your little hands together and to say, " Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name." Under what favourable circumstances were the days of your early childhood spent, compared with those under which many young people are brought up even in our father-land ! I have sometimes seen a flower planted in a genial soil, and in a corner of the garden where it was sheltered from the furious blast, but where it would catch the sun's bright rays and be watered by the gentle shower. How like to the position of this flower is that of a child born of Christian parents, and preserved, within the shade of a Christian home, from the temptations and allurements of the world. Far from the restraints which are imposed upon him being irksome and injurious they are highly valuable, and thankful should he be when his waywardness is checked and his self-will mortified, for otherwise they might lead him into the vortex of ruin. We knew a youth some years ago, who, though a child of Christian parents, formed an acquaintance with a boy who had been otherwise brought up, and who, from the description given by his companion of the theatre, conceived a strong desire to go to it. He dared not do so, however, without his mother's leave, and he therefore asked her to allow him to go *just for once*. But no ! she feared what the consequences would be ; for she knew that if her son went once he would wish to go again, and though he urged the point repeatedly her consent she would not give. He thought her too severe, and, perhaps, somewhat unkind ; but into a theatre he never went, and he lived to thank God for his mother's firmness and decision. Under restraints of this kind you, I trust, are placed ;

and God forbid that you should ever break through them, or that you should ever forget the instruction of a father and forsake the law of a mother; for "a foolish son is grief to his father, and bitterness to her that bare him."

But your home-privileges are numerous and varied. Like Timothy, whose pious mother Eunice, and whose aged grandmother, Lois, oftentimes, probably, took him to their side and told him the histories of Joseph, and Samuel, and David, and Josiah, you have known the Holy Scriptures from your childhood, having been accustomed to hear them read at the family devotions, and having been taught to read them yourselves as soon as you could read at all. For Methodism is not like Popery, which denies to its disciples the privilege of reading the lively oracles unless they are encumbered with the notes and glosses of men. Methodism is essentially Protestant, and gives to her families the Book of God, with many earnest exhortations to read and to study it; thus acting upon the principle of her great founder, Mr. Wesley, who said, "Let me be a man of one book." And in addition to the Bible,—than which no greater treasure can be found,—you have had other books put into your hands of a most beneficial tendency and aim,—not the light, frothy, and injurious literature with which the minds of many of the youth of our country are poisoned, so that they lose all taste for anything solid and substantial, but works of sterling merit,—histories, biographies, and missionary narratives, suitable to your expanding minds, and calculated to elevate your thoughts and feelings. For in Christian families such as you belong to, books of this description only ought to be admitted; and for the young to be kept in ignorance of works of a questionable character is

decidedly to their advantage, whilst to have the opportunity of reading at home works of real value in the several departments of literature and science is no small privilege; and it is a privilege which many of the youth of Methodism possess.

In your homes, too, prayer is daily offered up to God. Like the patriarch Job, who, fearing that his sons had sinned and cursed God in their hearts, offered burnt-offerings, according to their number, to make atonement for their transgressions, your father, youthful reader, knowing that, both by nature and by practice, you are estranged from God, often bows the knee before the Throne of Grace, and pleads for you the merits of that great atonement offered by the Saviour on the cross. Have you not sometimes seen him in the attitude of prayer, the tear-drop starting in his eye, and his whole countenance indicative of the deep feeling of his breast? And have you not often heard the earnest supplications he has offered for the spiritual and eternal welfare of his children? Or, perhaps, a mother's prayers come to your recollection, and you think of the chamber—so still and solemn—into which she took you when you were disobedient, and there talked to you until you wept and sobbed aloud, and then knelt down with you, and asked that, for Christ's sake, your sins might be forgiven. The privileges of such prayers who can estimate? Parents confer greater blessings on their children when they thus betimes lead them to the throne of God, than when they bestow on them the richest earthly gifts; and far more favoured is the youth who has a pious father or a pious mother, than one who belongs to the titled nobility of the land, but whose parents are strangers to vital godliness. In a recent biography of one thus favoured, and who became an eminently holy and useful man, it is

said :—"Pollok, when speaking of the religious character of his great poem, 'The Course of Time,' said, 'It has my mother's divinity,—the divinity she taught me when I was a boy : ' and Jonas might have said of the whole of his after existence, that it was radiant with the divinity of his early home." * Be thankful for the divinity of your early homes, ye youth of Methodism ; it is the divinity of the New Testament, pure, experimental, practical, and ennobling.

At home you have the privilege of the best society,—the society, not only of your parents, but, if you are one of several children, the society of brothers and of sisters who love you tenderly, and whom you ought to love as much. How pleasant are the hours you spend together ! How kindly are the influences that play around your heads ! Strife, anger, passion,—do they ever rise within your breasts ? In a moment they are hushed by a mother's gentle voice ; and, ashamed that in such a family as yours they should be permitted to spring up, you check them in an instant, and all is peace and love. Sometimes, perhaps, your circle is enlivened by the presence of a friend,—an honoured teacher, or a devoted minister of Christ, and then how pleasant and instructive is the conversation which you hear, and in which, as you grow older, you are permitted to take part ! We presume that in your families the topics of conversation are not the frivolous topics of the day, or the changing fashions of the age, much less those "personalities" which are "always spiced with more or less of malice." "Conversation," says an eminent writer, "may have all that is valuable in it, without anything that comes under the head of personality. The house in which, above all

* "Memorials of Jonas Sugden," by R. Spence Hardy.

others I have ever been an inmate in, the life and the spirit and the joy of conversation have been the most intense, is a house in which I hardly ever heard an evil word uttered against any one." * And such conversation only you, we trust, are accustomed to hear—conversation which, if not always strictly religious, is always seasoned with the salt of piety, and is, therefore, always profitable both to the head and to the heart. There are religious families, it is true, or families who wish to be thought religious, who indulge in conversation the most trivial and foolish, and who, for want of some other subject perhaps, do not hesitate to utter words, even in the presence of the youngest children, injurious to the character and reputation of their neighbours; but few, we trust, are the families belonging to that community whose founder called himself, and doubtless was "the friend of all, the enemy of none," in which such topics of conversation are allowed a place, for to vital piety they are a decided foe, and will soon, if countenanced, eat out its substance and its life. No; yours is a pleasant home, a peaceful home, a happy home; so much so that though it may not be a palace in which you dwell, but, in the eye of the traveller who passes by it, a very humble cot, yet a home it is, to you more attractive than the noblest mansion which you ever yet beheld. Happy are the hours you spend within its walls; sweet is the converse in which you there engage. With one of England's greatest poets, and one who above many loved an English home, you perhaps can say,—

"Oh days of heaven and nights of equal praise,
Serene and peaceful as those heavenly days,
When souls drawn upward in communion sweet,
Enjoy the stillness of some close retreat,

* "Guesses at Truth," II., p. 330.

Discourse as if released and safe at home
Of dangers past and wonders yet to come,
And spread the sacred treasures of the breast
Upon the lap of covenanted rest."

But do you, then, value the privileges of your home? There are many young people who do not value them until they are deprived of them, and then they regret that they were so little conscious of their worth. How does the sailor-boy think of his home and dwell on the recollection of it when he is tossed upon the mountain wave, and the storm threatens to overwhelm his bark, and no friendly voice is near to soothe his agitated mind! And it may be your lot some day, youthful reader, to leave your father's house, to encounter life's rough sea, and even to cross, as a sailor or an emigrant, the boisterous main. And then, if you do not now, will you know the value of a father's counsels and a mother's prayers, a brother's friendship and a sister's love, and then, when regrets are comparatively useless, you will perhaps be sorry that you thought so little of home-privileges when you had them. It may be that you sometimes fancy that you could find greater happiness elsewhere, and that you long for the day, as many a youth does, when you will be set free from the restraints of your parents' dwelling and allowed to roam at pleasure where you will; but be assured that wherever you may roam—amid the spicy plains of the Orient, or the mighty forests of the West—through Europe's many peopled cities, or Africa's solitary glens, you will find no spot on earth like home—the home of your childhood and your early years. Love it therefore now, and value its privileges as you ought. Do not think its rules too strict, its restraints too narrow, or its regulations too severe. "It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth;" and among the

privileges of a home like yours this is one of the most valuable that it puts a check upon that waywardness of mind, and that disposition to thoughtlessness and frivolity to which the young in general are so prone.

O blessed privileges of a pious home! Who can count their number? who can estimate their worth? Happier is that youth who grows up within their influence than he who dwells amid the luxury and the splendour of an eastern court. Were I a child again I would say, give me the humblest cottage in the land if it be consecrated by a father's prayers and a mother's tender care, in preference to the wealthiest home on earth, where Jesus is not known nor loved.

But perhaps some child or youth whose eye lights upon this page will say, "Alas, I have no such home as you have now described. I had once, but now I am an orphan, cast upon the wide, wide world, with few friends to care for me, and no place on earth that I can really call my home. Yet I am one of the youth of Methodism, for I was nurtured in its bosom, and I still attend a Wesleyan Sabbath-school." Yes, yours, dear child, is a painful lot, but if your parents loved the Saviour He has taken them to himself, and that for some wise reason which you are, at present, unable to comprehend. Nor will He forget you, for God is called "the father of the fatherless," and David knowing that He was such, said, "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up." Many an orphan child who has been deprived of the privileges of his early home has become, in a very remarkable way, "a child of providence," and around him there has been thrown a mighty arm protecting him in danger, and leading him in a path of light. Look up, then, to your father's God, and the prayers he offered for you on his dying bed that God will

hear, and you shall find that though "alone" you are "not alone," but that He is ever with you.

"Shrink not from life's bitter cup,
God shall bear thy spirit up :
He shall lead thee safely on,
Till the ark of rest is won,
Till thy spirit is set free
As thy day, thy strength shall be."

"But mine," says another of our readers, "is in some respects a still more painful lot. I have a home, but it is not a happy one. No prayer is ever offered there, nor are the sacred Scriptures ever read; but there God's laws are broken, his Sabbaths desecrated, and his name blasphemed. Yet I too claim a place among the youth of Methodism, for I am connected with its schools, and I love its sanctuaries." Poor youth! We pity you indeed. Yet think not that yours is a hopeless case, and that you will never be able to rise above your circumstances. Perhaps you have heard of the poor lad of Plymouth, whose father was addicted to intemperance, and who, as he was one day assisting that father in his employment as a builder, fell from the top of a ladder, and became by the fall so deaf that he could never afterwards distinguish any sounds. There was nothing for the poor lad after that but the workhouse; and to the workhouse he was accordingly consigned. Yet from that receptacle of pauperism and wretchedness he rose, by his own efforts, to considerable eminence, and, as Dr. John Kitto, the editor of the "Pictorial Bible," and the author of many valuable works, he possesses an almost world-wide fame. Nor must you forget that you may even be the instrument, in the hands of God, of changing the aspect of your home, and making it a home of piety and peace. Some time ago a gracious

revival of religion took place in a village in Yorkshire, during which many children and young people sought and found the inestimable blessing of pardon through the blood of Christ. Among them was a poor lad whose parents were ungodly, and whose home was, therefore, not a happy one. Having obtained a sense of God's favour one evening at the chapel, he hastened home with a heart overflowing with love and joy, to tell his relatives and friends of the change which had been wrought within his breast. "Father," said he, as he entered the dwelling, his countenance beaming with delight, and his eyes filled with tears, "father, God has forgiven me all my sins, and we must have family prayers to-night, and you must pray and mother too." His father and his mother could not utter a word. They fell upon their knees and began to weep, and the poor boy prayed for them, that God would convert and save them also. From that time their house became a house of prayer; they began to attend the Christian sanctuary, and a great change was soon apparent in their life and conduct. How much may a pious youth accomplish, though poor his circumstances and numerous his privations! We should rejoice if all the youth of Methodism possessed the privileges of a pious home; but let those who do not still take heart, and one day God may shine upon their dwellings and fill them with the radiancy of peace and love.

SECTION II.

THE PRIVILEGES OF SCHOOL.

"This fond attachment to the well-known place,
Whence first we started into life's long race,
Maintains its hold with such unfailing sway,
We feel it even in age, and at our latest day."—COWPER.

HOME is a school, the first, and therefore the most important in which a child is ever placed. There the tender sapling receives its earliest bent; there the little stream of life is directed in the beginning of its course. For good, or for evil, home is a school where lessons are taught, ideas formed, and principles imbibed which are sure to influence our after-life. A child's education begins when he is a nursling on his mother's lap, and under the parental roof it is carried on for a considerable time, so that impressions are there made upon the mind which no change of circumstances will ever totally erase.

It would be well if parents always remembered this. Momentous is the task assigned to them, and fearful are the responsibilities under which they lie. With every infant given them there comes a message from above. "Here is an immortal spirit committed to your charge. Train it for the skies and it will probably become an heir of bliss. Neglect its moral and religious interest, and the almost certain consequence will be its everlasting loss."

But the home-school is not the only school in which a child is trained. In some instances home education may be protracted with advantage, even until a youth has reached his teens ; but sooner or later, he must step beyond the threshold of his father's door, and, lest he should become a mere hothouse plant, be exposed to the tempests of the open world. Yet it would not do to send him at once into the midst of the busy scenes of life. For these he is not yet prepared. He needs yet further training for the battle he will be called to fight. And the school is a kind of intermediate position between his father's house and the world. Thither then let him go if possible, and there let him be further taught whatever it is desirable he should learn, that thus being gradually weaned from home-endearments, he may afterwards be prepared to step upon a higher stage of life, and, though retaining all his fond remembrances of a father's and a mother's love, feel himself sufficiently a man to contend with the difficulties which he may be ultimately called to meet.

For the children of her people Wesleyan Methodism has provided schools of various grades, from the most elementary ones for infants, to colleges for the instruction of youth in the highest branches of literature and science. The first building ever raised by Mr. Wesley was a school for the poor at Kingswood, to which he incidentally refers in his journal of June 26, 1739. He subsequently commenced a school at the Foundry in Moorfields, London ; and by several valuable publications, as well as by the rules he laid down to be observed by the Methodist preachers, he did more to promote the interests of the rising generation of his day than had been previously done by any one man for many years. Methodism came forth from the first, armed with

the panoply of heaven, to do battle with the ignorance that filled the land, and as she has gathered strength in her career, she has continued to wage the mighty warfare, a sworn and inveterate foe to sin and error, and an advocate for the spread of knowledge among all classes of the people. Hence, independently of her numerous private schools, and of her collegiate and other institutions, the Westminster Training School excepted, she now possesses 434 day-schools, having in them 52,636 scholars, whilst of Sunday-schools she has 4,166, containing scholars to the number of 437,814.

Is it possible, then, to form an adequate conception of the privileges of the youth of Methodism, arising from the schools in which they are instructed? We believe that there are few of them, in the present day, even in the obscurest village of the land, who have not at least a Sabbath-school to go to; and as our Sabbath-schools are the widest in their extent and operations, we will first remind you of the privileges which flow from them.

In the Sabbath-school you are taught to regard the sacredness of the Lord's-day, and by your attendance there, are drawn away from the path of worldly pleasure, which so many enter on that day, to the destruction of their highest weal. To the railway excursionist, or the steamboat traveller, or the rambler in the fields, Sundays may appear very happy days; but we will venture to say that when he lays down to rest at night, he is more weary in body, and far less peaceful in mind, than the scholar or the teacher of the Sabbath-school, who has been diligently occupied in the duties of his class. We remember being once, in our boyhood, enticed to engage in a boat excursion on the river on a Sabbath afternoon, instead

of going to the school as usual. Was that afternoon a happy one think you? No; it was one of the most wretched we ever spent; and we are persuaded that, if the conscience is not seared, Sunday recreations are always attended, or always followed, by disquietude and distress of mind. Invaluable is the Sabbath-school as a preventive of Sabbath desecration, and grateful should every child be who has been led within its walls for the restraints under which it places him from running with a multitude that do evil. It is a privilege to wear the yoke when it is a yoke so gentle, and when, if it were not imposed, we should be in danger of rushing down the fearful precipice and being dashed to pieces; and hence we trust that you will never be disposed to cast it off until you are called to occupy some other post. Love the Sabbath and the Sabbath-school, and learn to say and sing:—

“ Each Sabbath is a little pause
Between the world and me,
My selfish troubles it suspends,
It makes my soul more free.
Each Sabbath, then, I turn aside,
O world ! from thy pursuits ;
’Tis sacred to the eternal cause,
And sacred be its fruits.”

But there are other, and in some respects, still greater privileges in the Sabbath-school. There you learn to read, and not only to read, but in some degree to understand, God’s Holy Word, for there your teacher in a kind and gentle voice, like that of one I well remember who has long since entered into rest, seeks to impress upon your minds the lessons of eternal truth, and to lead you to the springs from which the living water gushes forth. For in Wesleyan, as in all Protestant Sunday-schools, the Bible is a class-book, and its

sacred pages are laid open to the eye as soon as a child is capable of reading them. And can you forget its facts and histories, or can you forget its admonitions and its warnings? No; the Sabbath-school is a mould into which the youthful mind being cast it there receives an impress which it can never wholly lose, and one which in instances innumerable leads to its renovation in righteousness and holiness of life. Many an one has left the Sabbath-school and entered on the scenes of active life, who, though for awhile thoughtless and forgetful of the lessons taught him, has afterwards, when far away from home perhaps,—on the mighty ocean, in the distant colony, or, it may be, in the field of battle,—had those lessons brought to his remembrance, and has wept, and prayed, and sought an interest in the Cross. “Have you a praying mother, and were you ever taught in a Sunday-school?” said Miss Nightingale to a youth who had been wounded on the plains of Inkermann, and whom, during his confinement in the hospital at Scutari, she watched like an angel with the utmost tenderness. He replied in the affirmative; and she said, “So I thought, for even in the height of delirium you were always referring to your mother’s prayers, with those of other good people, and were never tired of talking about Mr. Charles Cuthbertson and Mr. John Perry.” Ah! these persons had been his teachers in the Wesleyan Sunday-school, and here, on the bed of suffering, and in the midst of strangers, he remembered them, even when his mind was much disturbed,—an illustration this, of which thousands might be given, of the unspeakable value of Sabbath-school privileges.

Based upon the soundest Christian principles, and generally conducted by persons of piety and experience,

our Wesleyan Sunday-schools are like beautiful nurseries, where the tenderest plants are trained and cultivated with the utmost care, and where ultimately clusters of rich ripe fruit are seen hanging around on every side. If the fruit does not appear, or if, ere it ripens, it is withered and destroyed, the fault is not in the nursery, but in the fact that the plant has been taken out of it and exposed to the unkindly blasts of the wilderness, or to the ungenial climate of the world.

In our day-schools these advantages are combined with many others. I never enter one of those institutions now under the care of the Wesleyan Committee of Education, whether in a town or in a country village, without feeling the superiority of the position in which the rising generation of the present day are placed in comparison with that occupied by their parents, nor without gratitude to God that such a change has taken place within less than half a century, that a poor man's child can now obtain a better education than was formerly given to the children of the middle classes of society. Do you attend one of these schools, youthful reader? Yours are privileges which many a merchant's and many a nobleman's son would have been proud of in former times. Instruction is given to you in all the elementary branches of useful knowledge, and it is conveyed in such a way as to render it comparatively easy of acquisition, and almost as much a recreation as a task. You live, perhaps, far away from the crowded city—in some comparatively quiet village; and your parents are but poor, so that to gain a livelihood you are compelled to labour for some hours each day in the field or in the mill; but in the village is the valuable day-school, and there you can spend a portion of your time in learning to read, to write, and to understand accounts, qualifications which

open up to you fields of enjoyment and sources of power that in former ages were closed against the kings and princes of the earth. And if you are diligent you may advance beyond the first principles of knowledge. You may learn something of history, and geography, and music, and drawing; and you may thus lay the foundation, as not a few in your circumstances have done, of an English education which will fit you for any position in life into which providence may hereafter call you. Happy youth! Yours, in comparison with that of thousands, is an enviable lot, and we could wish that every child in "this imperial realm" might soon stand in it,

"so that none,
However destitute, be left to droop
By culture unsustained; or run
Into a wild disorder; or be forced
To drudge through weary life without the help
Of intellectual implements and tools;
A savage horde among the civilized,
A servile band among the lordly free."

Nor would we forget to remind you that it is strictly a *religious education* which is given you. In Wesleyan day-schools religion lies at the foundation of everything, and runs through every exercise and duty. So at least their conductors would have it; and it is their aim to make them the instruments of rearing a moral, God-fearing, and Christian population. They seek, too, "not to develop prematurely and forcibly the faculties of the mind," but to aid the child in putting forth its faculties more vigorously, and to bring out its comparatively dormant powers by a gradual process such as it can bear. Up to God would your teachers lead your minds, that knowing Him you may love Him, and that

loving Him you may daily walk in the light of his countenance and under the guidance of his eye.

But perhaps the reader belongs to another class of the Youth of Methodism—those whose parents have the means of sending them to one of those seminaries which are conducted by private individuals, and which are found in very many of the towns and cities of Great Britain, or to one of those proprietary and collegiate establishments which are now exerting so powerful an influence on some of the rising race. In either case, or in case you belong to “the sons of the prophets,” and are receiving your education at New Kingswood, or at the Grove, your school privileges are of the highest order. You are not under the parental roof it is true, and yet you have all, or nearly all, the comforts and enjoyments of home, for you are surrounded with teachers and with friends who are anxious to promote your happiness, and whose constant aim is to lead you into the paths of truth and peace. As in your father’s house, so also at school, no dancing, card-playing, or other recreations of an hurtful tendency are allowed; for we trust that in all Wesleyan schools such things are felt to be inconsistent with religion, and are, therefore, not only discountenanced, but forbidden. Time was when few public schools existed in the land, in which the morals of young people were not imperiled; and hence Cowper, in his “Tirocinium, or Review of Schools,” says,—

“Would you your son should be a sot or dunce,
Lascivious, headstrong, or all these at once,
That in good time, the stripling’s finish’d taste
For loose expense and fashionable waste
Should prove your ruin, and his own at last,
Train him in public with a mob of boys
Childish in mischief only and in noise,
Else of a mannish growth, and five in ten
In infidelity and lewdness, men.”

But though there are doubtless many schools yet, against which the same objections might be raised, we rejoice to know that, with the advancing intelligence of the times, a great improvement has taken place in most of these institutions, and that in Wesleyan schools of the class now referred to much care and vigilance are exerted to prevent the evils formerly complained of, and to render these establishments homes of piety for the cultivation of the purest moral principles, as well as for the expansion of the intellectual powers. True, a boy may be indolent, vicious, and immoral if he will; but if he is notoriously so, he will not be permitted to remain in the school long; and if he is so secretly the blame rests with himself. From what we know, and have seen, of many of the higher class of schools connected with Wesleyan Methodism, our conviction is that our young people have as many fences thrown around them there as they could have anywhere, and that if, as Dr. Arnold has shown,* a child must, sooner or later, become acquainted with *evil* as well as with *good*, and so cease to be a child in a certain sense, he can be placed in no transitionary state less hurtful to him than a Wesleyan school, nor in any position where he will learn so little evil combined with so much good. You, whom we are addressing, know this, and you know that if you are wicked or immoral it

* "For the truth is, that to the knowledge of good and evil we are born; and it must come upon us sooner or later. In the common course of things, it comes about that age with which we are here most concerned. I do not mean that there are not faults in early childhood, we know that there are; but we know also that with the strength and rapid growth of boyhood there is a far greater development of these faults, and particularly far less of that submissiveness which belonged naturally to the helplessness of mere childhood. I suppose that, by an extreme care, the period of childhood might be prolonged considerably; but still it must end; and the knowledge of good and evil, in its full force, must come."—*Sermons on "The Christian Life, &c."* p. 8.

is because your own evil hearts have led you astray, and because you have not regarded the instruction and advice which have been given to you so often by friends and teachers.

Your moral and religious privileges are of the greatest value. Hence many of your predecessors have risen to the highest eminence in the Church of Christ, and if you follow their example, you also may rise to eminence. And as it respects your intellectual advantages what could you wish for more? In classical literature, in mathematical science, and in general knowledge, the richest stores are opening to your minds, and if on your part there be diligence and application you may gain as lofty a position in the republic of letters as any of the alumni of Oxford or of Cambridge. Some of the first men in the Christian ministry, at the bar, and in the department of medical and other sciences, received their education where you are now receiving yours; and certainly if *you* are left behind in the race for learning, it will be because you loiter and make no effort to keep ahead.

There is an important distinction between instruction and education. To instruct is to impart information; to educate is to lead the mind out after truth and God. The latter as well as the former is the design of the training to which you are subject. Your teachers are anxious not only to inform you of what you were before ignorant, but to induce you to come out of yourselves, to use your own faculties, moral and intellectual, and to aspire after the highest attainments in knowledge and in goodness of which you are capable. O, value the privileges you possess! You are planted in a genial soil, and may attain, if you will, a lofty growth in whatever constitutes the true dignity of man. If *you* rise into

maturer life with stunted intellects and contracted minds, with unregenerate natures and unsanctified affections, you will have no reason to say the fault was in your "Alma Mater," for she is now watching over you with the utmost care, and fostering your minds with the greatest diligence. Perhaps you will love her some day better than you love her now. Perhaps you will one day estimate your privileges far more highly than you do at present. But remember, that these school-days when past can never be recalled, and that, ere long, regret of misspent time and lost opportunities will be vain and useless. "Youth," says a writer now no more, "is one of the precious opportunities of life,—rich in blessing if you choose to make it so, but having in it the materials of undying remorse if you suffer it to pass unimproved."

SECTION III.

THE PRIVILEGES OF THE SANCTUARY.

" Better a day thy courts within,
Than thousands in the tents of sin,—
How base the noblest pleasures there !
How great the weakest child of thine !
His meanest task is all divine,
And kings and priests thy servants are."

PERHAPS there are no greater privileges enjoyed by man on earth than those of a Christian sanctuary, in which God is worshipped in sincerity and his Word is preached with power. Buildings there are, some of them exceedingly imposing in their architecture, having lofty towers, and fretted roofs, and painted windows, and decorated altars, in which, it is to be feared, He is not thus worshipped, and in which His Word, if preached at all, is mingled with so much of human error as to be hurtful and injurious rather than beneficial, and to lead the mind into the regions of vain and empty speculation. But sanctuaries we have—and in favoured England they are by no means few—in which true worshippers worship the Father, and in which heaven-sent ministers proclaim Christ crucified with the demonstration of the Spirit and with power. And whether such sanctuaries are called cathedrals, or chapels, or kirks, and whether they are large and imposing, or but small and insignificant, they are spots very near the gate of heaven, in which privi-

leges are enjoyed, the full value of which no treasures of gold, or silver, or precious stones can represent.

Such sanctuaries, we do not hesitate to say, the youth of Methodism possess. Sabbath after Sabbath the feet of thousands of our youth are conducted by Christian parents or teachers to places (some of which were erected by their earlier ancestors, and around some of which repose many of the ashes of the sainted dead), which, if not memorable for their great antiquity, are memorable for the visitations from on high which have oftentimes been realized within their walls. How beautiful is the sight which may be witnessed on the Lord's-day in every town, nay, in almost every village in the land, of considerable numbers of children and young people wending their way to the habitations of the Holy One, and taking their seats in the house of God, there to join in the songs of Sion, and there to listen to the Word of Life! We have seen, especially in some of our many-peopled cities, numbers of the young led on the Sabbath to the railway station or the pleasure-garden; and we have seen, in the otherwise quiet hamlets of the country, many of them loitering in the fields during the sacred hours of the Lord's-day. Such young people may think themselves happy, and may talk of their liberty, and even boast of their freedom from the restraints of public worship; but happier far are those, and much greater is their freedom, who have been taught to "call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable," and who have learnt to say, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!" For true happiness is to be found, not in the round of worldly pleasures, but in the walks of heavenly wisdom, whose "ways are ways of pleasantness," and all whose "paths are peace."

That the youth of the Church of England, and the

youth of many Dissenting Churches, possess, to a great extent, the privileges on which we are now about to dwell, we most joyfully admit; but that the sanctuaries of Methodism offer advantages to the young seldom equalled and never surpassed, will be admitted by every one, whether old or young, who has been accustomed for any length of time to attend them. Nowhere is there purer worship; nowhere is there a more effective ministry; nowhere are there more frequent conversions to God.

Is it a privilege to join a Christian congregation in the holy worship of the Lord Jehovah? The youth of Methodism are favoured with it. The genuine simplicity and the heartfelt fervour which usually characterise the services of our sanctuaries are admirably suited to the youthful mind, the powers of which, as they gradually expand, are thereby brought into the most healthful play. In Wesleyan chapels there are none of those outward attractions which present themselves in the sanctuaries of the Church of Rome—the splendid altar, the imposing picture, the officiating priest,—all which things belonged to an inferior dispensation, and which tend to make worship merely ceremonial; but, what is far better, there is the earnest prayer, liturgical or extempore, which even a child may understand, and in which the youngest worshipper may join; and there is the hymn of praise rising up to heaven from united hearts, the sentiments of which are truly scriptural, and the poetry of which is pure and elevated. We cannot refrain from dwelling for a moment on the incomparable hymn-book which has been left to us as a sacred legacy by our fathers. Where, taking it as a whole, is such another to be found? A considerable number of the hymns which it contains were written by the Rev. Charles Wesley, who has therefore been called “the Poet of

Methodism," and who, as a writer of hymns, is placed by Montgomery, the bard of Sheffield, as second only to Dr. Watts. Many of the hymns of Dr. Watts are pre-eminently beautiful, and some of the best of them are found in the hymn-book referred to; but the hymns of the Rev. Charles Wesley, as well as several by his brother John, a few of them translations from the German, often rise higher in Christian sentiment—in faith, and love, and hope, than any hymns in the English language. "He has invested" his hymns "with a power of truth, and endeared them both to the imagination and the affections, with a pathos which makes feeling conviction, and leaves the understanding little to do but to acquiesce in the decisions of the heart." *

Popery has her hymns, some of them very ancient, and in sentiment unobjectionable; but some of them hymns to the praise of the Virgin, and some even to Joseph, the reputed father of our Lord. Pope Pius VII. granted an indulgence to every one who should devoutly repeat the following stanza:—

"Whoever blessed with health would spend
Life's transient day, and calmly end
That day without a fear;
To Joseph let them turn their eyes,
To Joseph let their prayers arise,
And he their prayers will hear."

What a contrast to the scriptural and soul-elevating sentiments of one of our hymns in the same metre!

"O Love Divine, how sweet thou art,
When shall I find my willing heart
All taken up by thee?
I thirst, I faint, I die to prove
The greatness of redeeming love,
The love of Christ to me," &c., &c.

* Introductory Essay to the "Christian Psalmist" by James Montgomery.

Words such as these last are often on the lips of Wesleyan congregations, and heart-stirring is it to witness a whole assembly rising to sing them; and to hear the voices of children and young people joining in the lofty strain. Even where, as in some village congregations, the music is not so rich in harmony as to please a scientific ear, there is, or may be, in the singing, much to cheer and elevate the soul; and that our youth are taught almost from their infancy to lisp in flowing verse the praises of their God and Saviour, is in itself a privilege too valuable to be duly weighed. Of all uninspired productions we would commend to the youth of Methodism this incomparable volume (including the hymns recently published for the young) as a book of poetry surpassed by none for purity of style and loftiness of thought, combined with expressions full of beautiful simplicity and of child-like confidence and hope. "Those hymns," says a recent writer, "are now sung in collieries and coppermines. How many has their heavenly music strengthened to meet death in the dark coal-pit; on how many dying hearts have they come back, as from a mother's lips, on the battle-field; beside how many death-beds have they been chanted by trembling voices, and listened to with joy unspeakable; how many have they supplied with prayer and praise, from the first thrill of spiritual fear to the last rapture of heavenly hope! They echo along the Cornish moors as the corpse of the Christian miner is borne to his last resting-place; they cheer with heavenly messages the hard bondage of slavery; they have been the first words of thanksgiving on the lips of the liberated negro; they have given courage to brave men, and patience to suffering women; they have been a liturgy engraven on the hearts of the poor; they have borne the name of Jesus far and wide,

and have helped to write it deep on countless hearts. And England is no more without a people's hymn-book."*

Is it a privilege to attend on a ministry truly scriptural, edifying, and instructive? That privilege is possessed by the youth of Methodism. Much is said and written now-a-days respecting the pulpit and those who occupy it, and we do not regret this if it tends to improve the character of pulpit ministrations, for the times demand that they should be of the very highest order. But we are far from thinking that the pulpits of our land are not well supplied, and we would have our youth to close their ears against those insinuations of the public press which would lead them to depreciate the preaching of the day. They are thrown out, for the most part, by men who have little or no regard for the truth, and who cannot listen with pleasure to a modern sermon because it disturbs their consciences and mortifies the pride of their unrenewed hearts. Had they lived in former days, they would have found as much fault with the Christian ministry as they do now. The fact is that in all our Evangelical Churches there are ministers and preachers not a few, of whom any age might be justly proud, and by whom the great truths of the Gospel are proclaimed from week to week with the greatest earnestness and zeal. But there is no ministry, taking it as a whole, superior to that with which Methodism is favoured. It was raised up by Divine Providence, above a century ago, to rouse with a trumpet voice a slumbering nation from its lethargy; and it has been perpetuated to this day, bearing essentially the same characteristics as those which distinguished it at the first.

* "The Voice of Christian Life in Song," p. 264. Nisbet, London.

It is, we believe, a godly ministry, and whilst in its ranks there are men of great variety of talents and acquirements, the doctrines it proclaims are everywhere the same, and the effects produced by it everywhere beneficial. We regret that there should be such a diversity of teaching in many Christian sanctuaries,—in one, semi-Popish or Tractarian error; in a second, broad Rationalistic dogmas; and in a third, the most frigid disquisitions on moral duty, instead of clear expositions of Christian doctrine; yet such is the acknowledged fact. But into whatever Wesleyan chapel you enter, whether in the crowded city, where the pulpit is occupied by one of the leading ministers of the body, or in some remote hamlet, where the preacher is but an humble layman, the trumpet will give a certain sound, and you will hear essentially the same great truths; man's fall, and man's redemption; salvation by faith; the necessity of the new birth; the privileges of the believer; and the duty of aspiring after Christian holiness.

In many instances these truths are set forth with burning words and overwhelming power, such as characterised the ministry of the Wesleys themselves, or of such men as Benson, Mather, Pawson, Dr. A. Clarke, Stoner, Watson, Smith, Newton, and many others; who though they have finished their course, have left their mantles behind them, which have fallen on their sons and successors in the work. Under *their* preaching many of your fathers sat, and by it were aroused to a sense of their guilt and danger, and then led in penitence and faith to Christ. And now it is your privilege to listen to the ministry of those whom they were the instruments of raising up, and who possess much of their spirit, zeal, and piety. We have heard some

young people say, "How much we should like to have heard Mr. Wesley, or Mr. Benson, or Dr. Adam Clarke, preach!" and they seem to think that, because these good men died before they were born, or were old enough to hear them or to appreciate their ministry, they have sustained an irreparable loss. But let them remember to whom they *may* listen, and let them learn to value *the living ministry*, the ministry of their own times, the ministry which God has sent amongst them for their conversion and instruction. Let them not listen to those who would disparage that ministry; neither let them learn to ape the critic, and when they come from the sanctuary on the Sabbath morning or evening, try to find fault with the sermon instead of gathering from it profitable instruction. Our intelligent and better educated youth are greatly in danger of this, especially if the ministry they attend is not of the highest intellectual character; but to despise even the humblest messenger of the cross, if he preaches the truth according to his abilities, is no evidence of good sense, nor can it ever be beneficial to the mind, or pleasing in the sight of God. The youth of Methodism may go to many a pasture before they will find one richer than their own. They may wander about, with an ear for novelties, to many a sanctuary, ere they will meet with better preachers than they have. Many of them are fed with "the finest of the wheat," and if they will but listen to and appreciate the instructions of the pulpit, we doubt not that they will become wise and holy Christians.

Is it a privilege to be often within the range of the converting power of God, and therefore to be the subjects, and that very frequently, of the drawings of the Holy Ghost? The youth of Methodism possess this privilege too. A measure of Divine influence generally connects

itself with the proclamation of the truth, even when the preacher is not himself a converted man; for the Holy Spirit loves to do honour to God's own Word, and will sometimes employ it for the sinner's good, even when uttered by unhalloved lips. Hence genuine conversions, doubtless, take place in all Protestant and Evangelical Churches, and perhaps there is not a Christian sanctuary in the land in which *the truth* has been preached for any length of time, that has not been the birthplace of immortal souls. To attend any place of worship in which the great and leading doctrines of the Gospel are set forth is, therefore, to come within the sphere of the Spirit's operations, and to be *in the way* to obtain that grace by which the heart is renewed in righteousness and true holiness, and the soul set free from the bondage and the tyranny of sin. But no one will affirm that the same measure of Divine influence attends every ministry, and is felt in every sanctuary, for there are churches and chapels in which, though the hymns sung are unexceptionable in sentiment, and the sermons preached most orthodox in doctrine, there is, from some cause or other, a want of fervour, devotion, and power, so that the heart remains unsoftened, the conscience unawakened, and the will unbroken and unsubdued. Perhaps this is the case in some of our own sanctuaries at times, for every Christian Church is liable to sink into a state of Laodicean ease, and to lose the life of genuine piety; but we are persuaded that there are not many of our chapels in which, save where the Societies have become cold and dead, there is not frequently such a measure of Divine influence attending the ministry of the Word, that oftentimes the most careless are awakened, and the most thoughtless led to pray. What scenes of penitential sorrow have been witnessed, at one period or another, in almost every Wes-

leyan chapel in the land ! and what multitudes of persons, young and old, rich and poor, have there exchanged their filthy garments for the robes of righteousness and praise ! As a people, we have never been afraid of genuine revivals of religion, and I trust we never shall be ; and God has honoured the Methodist ministry in making it the instrument of the conversion of thousands of immortal souls. If anywhere you can get within the sphere of the influence of the Spirit—an influence which will take hold upon your youthful affections, and draw them to the Saviour,—an influence which will subdue the pride and obstinacy of your hearts, and lead you to give those hearts to God, it is in the sanctuaries of that section of the Christian Church with which you are already in part connected, and hence we think that your privileges are invaluable, and are not surpassed by those of any of the youth of our country, either in the higher or the lower ranks of life. I might appeal on this point to the experience of thousands of you. Have you not often gone, with your parents, your friends, or your Sabbath-school teachers, to the house of God, and there, as you have listened to the earnest and faithful addresses of the preacher, felt within your breasts strange emotions, good desires, and holy aspirations after God ? and has not the thought arisen in your minds, “ The minister is addressing me ; I am the sinner he is now describing. I need that Saviour of whom he speaks ? ” And have you not returned home, and either sought a place where you could pray in secret, or opened your mind to a pious mother, and made resolutions to turn from the paths of sin and folly, and to become the followers of Christ your Lord ? Aye, and some of you have carried those resolutions into practice. Perhaps, whilst yet within the sphere of that influence which came down upon you in the

house of God, you wept tears of penitence for sin, which, ere long, were exchanged for tears of gratitude and joy; and never will you forget the spot where the burden of your guilt was taken away,—where, like Bunyan's Pilgrim, you first caught sight of the cross, and the load that oppressed you fell off of itself, as by faith you gazed upon the Crucified; or, perhaps, that influence followed you home, and, though you strove against it for a time, ultimately brought you in penitence to your Saviour's feet, where you heard the whispers of his voice, saying to you, "Thy sins are forgiven thee; go in peace."

It is, we believe, to those gracious visitations from on high with which God has often been pleased to favour our congregations that numbers owe their conversion, and all the blessings consequent upon it; and we know of no Christian community whose sanctuaries are more frequently pervaded with the influences of the Holy Spirit than our own, and therefore of none where the young would be more likely to be awakened to a sense of sin, and led into the possession of experimental piety. We fear, indeed, that just because the Wesleyan ministry is accompanied with so much of the Spirit's power, not a few of our youth, finding that they cannot sit under it with an easy conscience, go elsewhere, rather than listen to the searching appeals addressed to them, and endure the pain of resisting the convictions which frequently spring up within their breasts. But it is perilous for a youth to take such a step as this, for it is to trample on one of the greatest privileges which he can possibly enjoy,—to withdraw from a sphere in which he has been placed by the providence of God, and in which, if anywhere, he is in the way of becoming a partaker of regenerating grace. Value, we beseech you, the

privileges of the sanctuary, and this among the rest,—that it is the place in which there frequently come down the genial showers of grace, in which the heart is softened, the mind illumined, and the conscience roused, and in which the joys of pardon often fill the breast, and the cry is heard of exulting new-born souls.



PART THE SECOND.

The Responsibilities of the Youth of
Methodism.

"SEEING YOU ALL, SO MANY LIVING SOULS FOR WHOM WE MUST GIVE ACCOUNT, AND WHO MUST ALSO GIVE ACCOUNT OF YOURSELVES, THE ONE THOUGHT THAT RISES IN THE MIND IS THE EARNEST DESIRE THAT YOU BE, NOT NOTHING, BUT SOMETHING; THAT YOU SHOULD GIVE YOUR ACCOUNT WITH JOY, AND NOT WITH GRIEF; THAT YOU SHOULD BE, NOT ENEMIES OF GOD, NOR MURMURING SLAVES, BUT HIS TRUE AND LOVING CHILDREN, FORGIVEN AND ACCEPTED IN JESUS CHRIST."—*Dr. Arnold.*

SECTION 1.

RESPONSIBILITY—WHAT IS IT?

"O man, thou art a creature, boast not thyself above the law.
Think not of thyself as free; thou art bound in the trammels of
dependence.

What is the sum of thy duty, but obedience to righteous rule,
To the great commanding oracle, uttered by delegated organs?"

—TUPPER.

PRIVILEGES imply responsibilities, for to whom much is given, of them much will be required. There are few young people, however, who are fully conscious of this fact, or who, if conscious of it, bear it sufficiently in mind; and hence many of them are thoughtless, trifling, and inconsiderate, as if they supposed themselves their own masters, and imagined that no one had any right to call them to account either for their actions or their words. Nor do they like to be reminded of the contrary, but will even resent the kindest and gentlest admonition, and, perhaps, tell the friend that utters it to mind his own business, and not theirs. It is difficult, therefore, to get the attention of some of our youth to a subject of this kind, either from the pulpit or through the press, yet the task must be attempted, and we would fain hope that the youth addressed in these pages, and in whose hands this volume may be placed, will ponder seriously what we have to say to them on the subject of their responsibilities, momentous and important as they are.

What is meant by responsibility? is a question which may be answered in a few words. It is simply answerableness, or the state of one who is accountable for a trust, for an office, or for the use of a talent committed to his care. In such a state every intelligent creature is placed by the great Author of his being ; the very fact of his possessing intelligence rendering him accountable, to the extent of his knowledge and of his means of obtaining more. We do not look upon an infant as responsible, for, as yet, reason has not fully dawned upon its mind, so that it is not capable of judging between good and evil, or of understanding the difference between right and wrong. It is, therefore, very foolish, and often very unkind, to be angry with an infant, because it cries. Its crying may be unpleasant to our ear ; but it knows no better, and ought not, therefore, to be scolded, either by its parents or by any one else, especially as there is, doubtless, some cause for its crying, even when we are unable to discover what it is. And because an infant is not responsible, it is, in case of its dying, saved through the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ, and its happy spirit admitted into the realms of light and bliss there to expand in wisdom, there to increase in holiness, there to spend a blissful eternity in the society of angels and in the immediate presence of God. There are multitudes in heaven at this moment who were never held accountable whilst here on earth ; for their sojourn was too brief to allow their latent powers of thought and of reflection to burst forth. That little sister that you loved so dearly, whom you often rocked in her tiny cradle, and over whose sweet form you used to bend with all but ineffable delight, but whom you saw wither like a flower beneath the hand of death, laid in a coffin, and then committed to the dust, is now yonder, above

the stars,—yonder, among the shining ranks of the redeemed; for though she possessed a sinful nature, which, had she lived a few years, would soon have manifested itself in unholy passions and desires, yet, as she never committed actual transgression, the loving Saviour who had bought her with his blood, imparted to her, in some way unknown to us, his Holy Spirit, and made her meet for the inheritance of the holy ones. He just planted her in his earthly garden for a little time, and then, foreseeing perhaps that she would be exposed to the unfriendly blasts, took her away “from the evil to come,” and transplanted her in the more genial soil of paradise, where all her faculties will find room for their development and scope for their noblest and most ample exercise. We cannot, for a moment, doubt this with regard to any child dying in infancy; for that infants are redeemed by the blood of Christ it were derogatory to his goodness to deny; and “who can say,” asks one, “how early the first dawning rays, which precede the morning light of the spiritual day, enter into the infant soul?” An infant, though irresponsible, is certainly capable of receiving the Holy Spirit, and therefore of being regenerated by his grace, and though not because it is irresponsible, but rather because it is the purchase of the Redeemer’s blood, and has never committed actual transgression, its disembodied spirit is borne on angels’ wings to the bosom of its Lord.

At what age a child becomes responsible cannot perhaps be positively affirmed, for in the case of one possessed of a superior mind and of higher advantages, the period will be earlier than in the case of one who is less favoured. There are two stages of responsibility through which we have to pass, the one blending into the other, and, by degrees, becoming swallowed up in it—the stage

of responsibility to our earthly parents, and the stage of responsibility to our Father who is in heaven.

There is, first, the stage of responsibility to our earthly parents. Almost as soon as a child can walk it is answerable for its conduct to the mother that watches over it, and to the father by whose hand it is gently led. As yet it is incapable of knowing anything of the great invisible God; but its parents stand to it in God's place, and whilst they are responsible to *Him* for the manner in which they nurture and instruct it, it is responsible to *them* for its actions and its words, and for the improvement it makes of the culture bestowed upon it. And somehow or other it is conscious of the fact. At a very early age, will a child understand the meaning of a single glance of its mother's eye, its little conscience answering to the look of kind reproof, and saying to it, "You have done something wrong." Do you not remember that when you were a very little child, just beginning to step across the floor, or just beginning to utter a few words, how you sometimes displayed a passionate spirit, and how, when your mother uttered your name in that peculiar tone of voice which indicated that she was grieved with you, you blushed, and wept, and ran to her lap as if you could not bear to meet her eye? You felt that she had a right to call you to account for those displays of childish passion, and you stood at her bar as a condemned culprit, and could not be happy until she had given you the reconciling kiss. Now we want to impress this fact upon your minds,—that in childhood and in youth you are responsible to your parents, that you are bound to honour them, that it is your duty to submit to them, that the relationship in which they stand to you gives them a right to control and guide you, and that, if they are Christian parents

especially, it is incumbent upon you to take their word as the rule and guide of your life. The household is a little kingdom, upon the throne of which the father and the mother jointly sit, swaying the sceptre of rule in gentleness and love, for the mutual benefit of all the members of their family; and

“The house where the master ruleth, is strong in united subjection,
And the only commandment with promise being honoured, is a blessing to that house.”

But there is a sad tendency in many young persons to claim a right to think, and judge, and act for themselves, to call in question parental authority, and to break away from the restraints imposed upon them, however mute and gentle they may be. Not a few of the children of pious parents do this openly and boldly, setting themselves up at home above all authority and rule, and proudly demanding the lordship over themselves, as if they thought their father's authority an impertinence and their mother's request a wrong. We have known young men, forgetful of their responsibility to their parents, or unwilling to acknowledge it, and, finding that under their father's roof they could not act as they chose, forsaking that roof, like the prodigal in the parable, and betaking themselves to the society of the ungodly, where they have supposed they could pursue the inclinations of their minds with all the freedom they could wish. But bitter has been the fruit of their folly, and sad the consequences of their sin. O listen to the voice of warning, and dare not, whilst you live beneath your parents' eye, and are dependent on their industry and care, to call in question their right to your obedience in everything that does not interfere with the claims of your conscience in the sight of God!

And such a sense of responsibility to parents should rest upon the minds of the young that they should be restrained from doing wrong, not only when seen, but also when not seen; when their parents are from home, or when they themselves are distant from their father's house. That was beautiful advice given by a father to his son as he parted with him on his going to school: "You tell the truth, keep a brave and kind heart, and never listen to or say anything you wouldn't have your mother and sister to hear, and you'll never feel ashamed to come home; or we to see you." It is a good thing for a boy to possess such a regard for his parents' authority, as, when no longer seen by them and when exposed to severe temptation, to say to himself, "If I commit this sin, I shall have to account for it," and to tremble at the thought of having to go into their presence with a conscience ill at ease. "You are a coward, Tom," said a number of boys to one of their companions because he would not go with them to take a bird's-nest. He would not go simply because his mother had forbidden him; but it was hard work, at the same time, to be called a coward. Was he, then, a coward? No, but a true hero, for he could brook the insult of his playmates, but could not bear the thought of meeting his mother's eye with the consciousness of having disobeyed her commands. "She will never know it," said one of the boys; but he considered that whether she ever knew it or not, God would know it and that the remembrance of it would cling to his own conscience; and therefore he did not entertain the temptation for a moment.

It will, perhaps, be asked by some of our youthful readers, for what are we responsible to our parents? And how long will our responsibility to them last? In answer to the first of these questions we do not hesitate

to say that you are responsible to them for all your actions and your words,—for your conduct at home and your conduct abroad, for the example you set before the younger members of the family, for the improvement you make of your various privileges, for the use or the abuse of all the favours conferred upon you. They have a right to call you to account for every foolish word you utter and for every sinful act which you commit; nor ought you to think that they take a step beyond their province, though day by day they exact of you some account of the manner in which it has been spent, the company with whom you have associated, and the recreations in which you have engaged. It is a happy thing for the young when their parents, duly sensible of the position in which they stand to their children, feel bound to require of them an account of their conduct; for many are the sad instances in which children and young people having been allowed by their parents to take their own course, *without being asked any questions*, have at length become spendthrifts, prodigals, and outcasts of society. But there are many young people who do not like to be asked questions, even by those who stand to them in the highest of all the relationships of earth, and who will even resent those questions as impertinent and out of place. “What has my father to do,” asks the thoughtless and giddy youth, “with the way in which I spend my money, or the manner in which I occupy my leisure hours, or the character of those with whom I associate when I am not at home?” *What has he to do with it?* Everything, young man; absolutely everything; and were he not to require of his son an account of such matters he would be an unkind and unfaithful father. A curse fell upon the house of Eli because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. Reprove

them he did, but it was too gently, too sparingly, and hence the glory departed from his family.

Is it asked how long does the responsibility of the young to their parents last ? The reply we offer is, until they come to such an age as to be wholly independent of their parents' care, and wholly responsible to God Himself. Every young person is accountable to his parents as long as he remains under the parental roof; but his accountability to them does not, in every instance, cease when he leaves that roof; not, for instance, when he goes to school, nor when he becomes an apprentice to a trade; for though he then becomes accountable also to the masters under whom he is placed, and is bound to obey them also, as his immediate guides, yet he is still answerable for his general conduct to his father and his mother who have delegated their office to others but in part. Hence at intervals he should write to them, with all candour and simplicity. He should not say to himself, "I am no longer under my father's government, and will therefore no longer submit to his control;" but he should say, "My father has placed me here for my good and at considerable expense, and he has a right, therefore, to know what studies I am pursuing and what improvement I am making. I will write and tell him, and will ask his counsel and his prayers."

A youth's letters from school, if such as they ought to be, are always welcome to a parent's heart. With what interest they are read, first by one member of the family and then by another—handed by the father to the mother, and by the mother to each of the children who are at home, in turn,—smiled over, wept over, with emotions that cannot be described; and then answered in terms which only the fondest affection could dictate !

But the youth who thinks, when he has left his home, that his responsibilities to his parents are at an end, will write no letters of a satisfactory character, and thus the sacred tie which should bind him to his truest friends will be in danger of being broken like the string of the far-stretched bow.

It is not well, under any circumstances, for young people to try to get rid of their responsibilities to their earthly parents *too soon*. The period will come, and that quite soon enough, when their childhood and their youth will cease, and when, having arrived at honourable manhood, they will stand in a state of immediate responsibility to God, rather than to man; but the tendency of young people of almost all classes in the present day is to shorten the period of youth, and to wish to become men and women before they have obtained the requisite wisdom and stability. "I should like to be my own master," is the inward saying of many a young man of from sixteen to eighteen years of age; and he fancies that it is quite time for him to throw off all parental restraints, and to think, and judge, and act for himself. Let the youthful reader resist the insidious thought, and let him cultivate an humble, docile spirit, and be willing to be deemed a youth, or even a child, a little longer; for now it is, especially, that he needs the restraints imposed on him by his earthly friends, and, were he to break away from them now, he would, in all probability, become like the wild ass's colt, and would soon find that he would be unable to control the evil passions and dispositions of his mind. Happy is that youth whose loving mother and whose prudent father are spared to him until he reaches the early years of manhood; and far from seeking to get rid of their authority, he should

rejoice that they still live to sway their mild and gentle sceptre over the family of which he forms a part.

The second stage of responsibility is generally entered upon long before the first terminates, for the young become accountable to God as soon as they are capable of understanding anything respecting Him as their Creator, Benefactor, and Judge. At what age this may be we cannot with certainty decide; for it will depend partly on the mental faculties, which unfold themselves earlier in some cases than in others, and partly on the advantages of training and education. The child Samuel ministered before Eli the priest, and when the voice of God spake to him he ran to Eli, for as yet he knew not the Lord. And there is many a child to whom God speaks—speaks in the gentle whispers of his Spirit, who does not know that it is God who speaks. Gradually, however, in most instances, but in some, as in a moment, the truth reveals itself to the opening mind, that there is a Being whom he cannot see, but who made the sun, and the stars, and the green earth, and the hills, and the streams, and the flowers of the field, *and himself*, and that that Being's eye is ever over him, observing his conduct and taking notice of everything he does. How early does conscience begin to operate in the breast of a child who has been taught to pray! Yes, youthful reader, there is such a thing as conscience, and already you have often felt its secret power. You cannot see God, and even when you do wrong He does not appear to you, or reprove you by an audible voice; but He has implanted in your nature that mysterious faculty, and it tells you, if nothing else does, that He exists, and tells you, moreover, that you are accountable, not only to your earthly

parents, but to Him, your Proprietor and God. Conscience has been called the God within us,—

“that sole monarchy in man
Which owes allegiance to no earthly prince;
Made by the edict of creation free;
Made sacred, made above all human laws,
Holding of Heaven alone.”

Do you remember the day when you told the first lie? What was it that made you so unhappy,—that caused your countenance to blush like crimson,—that prevented you from lying down to sleep in peace? Not the mere sense of having grieved your parents, for even after you had made confession of your guilt, and they, so far as they could, had forgiven you the sin, you were still restless, sorrowful, and sad. Yes; for you felt that there was a higher tribunal to which you were amenable,—that you had sinned against your Creator and your God, and that He was angry with you for having told that lie. It is this fact,—that such a faculty as conscience exists, and that it begins to operate in very early life, which proves the doctrine of responsibility to God, and which proves, moreover, that children and young people are responsible to Him, as well as to those under whose more immediate authority He has placed them. Their responsibilities to their earthly and their heavenly Father are, for a considerable time, coeval, and blend one into another. In the period of early childhood, and whilst yet they are incapable of understanding their relationship to God, they are responsible to their earthly parents; but as soon as they arrive at years of reflection, and are better acquainted with the Being who created them, they become responsible to Him also; yet, whilst their responsibilities to their earthly parents will one day terminate their responsibilities to God will run on for ever.

That our young people should understand this is of vital importance to their highest interests. They are not their own, but the property of that God who made them, who endowed them with intelligence, and who placed them in circumstances so favourable and happy. Let them recognise the fact, and hold themselves answerable to Him, and to their friends under Him, for the advantages they possess and the course of conduct they pursue. And we would further remind them that to God they are responsible for more than they are responsible to man; for the opinions which they form, and even for the thoughts which they indulge; and that, whilst they may hide from man many sins that they commit, and so escape every earthly tribunal, from God they can hide nothing,—no secret act, no whispered word, no silent thought,—for that He is about their bed and about their path, and spieth out all their ways. Absolute solitude there is none,

“Save what man makes, when in his selfish breast
He locks his joy, and shuts out others' grief;”

for even the desert speaks of the name of Deity, and the wilderness utters forth His praise. “Can God see in the dark?” asked a little boy whose conscience troubled him for having taken something which was not his own, but who had contrived to take it under cover of the night. The question itself conveyed its own answer, and indicated that in the child's own breast there was a voice that said,—“Thou God seest me!”

Nor must the young forget that the responsibilities they owe to God are more sacred than those they owe to any earthly friend, and must, therefore, be acknowledged first. It is not probable that the parents of those young people to whom these pages are specially addressed will

ever interfere with the claims of their children's consciences, and require them to do anything which they themselves cannot approve of. A pious father knows that he has no right to come between the conscience of his child and God; and hence, though he may differ from his child in reference to a point of duty, and therefore try to convince him that he is wrong, yet if that child is old enough to form a judgment for himself, such a father will not dare to impose his own authority in opposition to his child's convictions of what is right. *But*, if the parents of any of our readers are not pious, and should ever require them to do what their consciences tell them is wrong in the sight of God,—to attend the theatre, for example, or to violate the Sabbath, they must remember that they are amenable to God rather than to man, and must be willing to suffer persecution, and even alienation, rather than transgress the laws of Heaven. “You shall not pray here,” said a wicked father to his son, who had become awakened to a sense of sin; but the youth felt that he must pray, let the consequences be what they might. He was banished from his father's house; but it was, ere long to be invited back, and to see that father himself a penitent on his knees.

SECTION II.

RESPONSIBILITY—ITS MEASURE AND EXTENT

Largely thou givest, gracious Lord,
Largely Thy gifts should be restor'd,
Freely Thou givest, and Thy word
Is "Freely give."—KEBLE.

THE more a servant is intrusted with, the larger is the account which he must render to his master. This principle is beautifully illustrated in one of our Lord's parables, recorded by St. Matthew, the lessons of which we should like to impress upon the minds of all our youth. In that parable a man is represented as about to take a journey into a far country, but, before he sets out, calling to him his servants and delivering to them his goods. To one he gives five talents, to another two, and to another one, to every man according to his several ability, and straightway takes his journey. For what purpose are these talents committed to them? Not to be wasted, not to be suffered to lie unemployed, but to be used to the very best advantage, so that when the master returns he may receive from his servants a good account, and bestow upon them a proportionate reward.

That master is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ; the talents are the blessings of his grace and providence; the servants, to whom he has intrusted them, are his people, and, among others, the youthful

readers of these pages. He has not given the same number of talents to all men, to all young people, to all the youth whom we are now addressing ; for, as we shall soon perceive if we look around us, there are some whose advantages, intellectual and moral, whose means of usefulness, and whose opportunities of doing good, are far greater and more numerous than those of others. In this Christian country at least, there are very few, if any, to whom no talent is given, whatever may be the case with those who live in the wilds of heathenism ; yet even here we find great diversity, not only of natural gifts, but of religious privileges, and that too amongst the young as well as amongst others. Here for example, is a boy living in a secluded village, whose parents are too poor to give him an education even if they were so disposed ; and who, to earn his living, must labour hard in the mill or in the field, six days out of seven, often, perhaps, with but little food, and often, perhaps, with but scanty clothing ; yet even he possesses one talent, one advantage, for there is in the village a well-taught Sabbath-school to which he has been taken by a friend, and where, if he is diligent, he may learn to read, and, in part, to understand God's holy Word. But here is another boy who resides in the busy town, whose parents occupy a position in society of considerable respectability, and who is surrounded with means of improvement intellectual, moral, and religious, of every kind. He possesses advantages to which the village boy is an entire stranger—superior day-school instruction, all the ordinances of the Christian sanctuary, home-comforts, and the most genial companionship. And here is a third boy who moves in a still higher circle, whose friends are affluent yet truly pious, and for whom everything is done that can be, to train him in the paths

of virtue and to furnish him with a polite and liberal education. He lives amidst the elegances and arts of life, he has at his command the choicest productions of the press, the best instruction is given him in Christian knowledge, and he is protected from those evil influences which play around our youth in general and often counteract the better influences of which they are the subjects.

Now the responsibilities of these three boys are necessarily very different both in their nature and amount. No one will expect the village boy to become an eminent scholar; no one would be satisfied with the boys, possessed of superior advantages, were they to turn out dunces or fools. We are not surprised that a fruit-tree planted in the wilderness where it has but little moisture and is exposed to the burning sun, should, though it is a fruit-tree, produce but little fruit; but if we see a tree of the same description planted in a garden, carefully watered, screened from the fury of the blast, and cultured with the utmost pains, and yet producing little fruit, and that little of a very ordinary kind, we are both surprised and grieved, and are ready to say, Let it be cut down. And what we look for in the natural world—fruit proportionate to the nature of the tree and the advantages it possesses of soil and climate; we also look for in the world of mind,—less from those to whom little is given,—more from those whose advantages are superior.

Nor is it enough that he who possesses five talents should employ but three, or that he who possesses two should be prepared to account for only one. In the parable the servants are represented as appearing before their lord to give up their accounts, and he that had received five talents brings other five, he that had

received two brings other two; each having employed all the talents intrusted to him, and made them double. Hence their lord is satisfied, and says to each, "Well done, good and faithful servant," which he scarcely would have said had either of them brought a less satisfactory account. The one talent, too, must be employed, though it be but one. He who had received but one was condemned,—and condemned, not because he had wasted it, but because he had buried it and not used it. Nor could he excuse himself on the ground that it was but one. He was asked to account for one only; but that one he was bound to account for, as righteously as he who had received five was bound to account for five.

On the other hand, it is possible, especially for a youth, seeing that he has a long life before him, to make his one talent five or even ten; to improve the single advantage he possesses so diligently as to multiply it several times, and thus to shoot far ahead of those who, in the first instance, were considerably in advance of him. Many noble examples of this kind are on record. In the year 1362 was born at Higham Ferrers a boy who was called Henry Chicheley, and whose employment, as he grew up, was that of tending his father's sheep. He was, however, an intelligent lad, and, being taken under the patronage of William of Wykeham, rose by his industry and perseverance, step by step, until at length he became Archbishop of Canterbury. And you have heard, perhaps, of the modern missionary and traveller David Livingstone, whose name has recently become almost a household word. He was a poor Scotch lad, and had to work hard for his living in a mill; but he was studious, diligent, and prayerful, and,

by his own efforts, he qualified himself for a sphere of usefulness which few were prepared to fill.

Let no one say, then, I have but one talent and can do nothing with it. What should we think of the honey-bee refusing to build its cell and gather in the honey because it can do nothing else; or of a dray-horse refusing to plough because it cannot contend in a race? But the inferior animals are often wiser than men, for they are willing to do what nature teaches them, and are useful according to the abilities they possess. We may learn many a lesson from them, and this among the rest, not to despise the meanest gifts, but to use them as best we may and can.

But most of the youth of Methodism possess, as we have seen, many privileges—many talents; and hence their responsibilities are both numerous and weighty. The day will come when their Lord and Master will require at their hands an account of their home advantages, their school privileges, and their sanctuary blessings, and will ask them how the talents He intrusted to their care were employed. What has He a right to expect from them? What have their friends a right to expect? What has the Church a right to expect? No more than from those children who, alas! are taught from their infancy to swear and steal, and of whom there are thousands in the cities of our own land? No more than from heathen children who never hear of the Saviour of the world, never see a Christian book, never look upon a Sabbath sun? Assuredly not. Their responsibilities, compared with yours, are very light, sad and pitiable though their case may be. There may be seen every day in some of the streets of the City of London numbers of young people living in the deepest wretchedness, addicted

to all kinds of vice, frequenting the gin-palaces, and openly violating the laws of God without reproof or check; and we ourselves have witnessed, in a distant part of the world, thousands wrapped in utter ignorance, upon whose minds no ray of light from the Sun of Righteousness has ever shone, and in whose ears no word of kind instruction has been heard. These heathen children, both of London and of Africa, are creatures of God, are possessed of an immortal nature, and will one day have to stand before the bar of the eternal Judge; but look at their position in comparison with yours! We can conceive one of the former standing before the Judge and saying, "I was the child of godless parents; I was taught from my infancy to curse and swear; I was never taken to a Christian school; I was never led to the house of God; I lived in a Christian land, but I knew nothing of Christianity, for I was not taught to read or pray, or even to lisp the name of Christ, and though I confess that I often heard a voice within my breast telling me that I was wicked, and calling on me to repent, yet I scarcely knew what it was, and amidst the society in which I moved that voice was silenced, and became less and less distinct." And we can conceive an African or an Indian child standing before that Judge and saying, "I was born in a land of heathenism, where false gods were worshipped, cruel rites observed, and idol temples reared; and my parents took me to the festivals of their deities, where I witnessed the most revolting scenes, and heard the most fearful sounds; but I knew not that these things were wrong, for the missionary of the cross never reached my dwelling, nor was a Christian school ever established within my reach. I used sometimes to ask, Who is the true God? Is there another state of being? What will become of me when I die? But all around

me were as ignorant as myself, and I could obtain no answer to any of these questions." And, again, we can conceive of a Christian child—a child favoured with privileges such as yours, in the presence of that Judge, called to give up *his* account; and, supposing him to have been neglectful of his privileges, compelled to say, "I was taught by a kind mother to bow my knees in prayer; I was led at a very early age to the Sabbath-school, and to the house of God; I learnt to read God's holy Word and to sing the hymns and songs of Zion; I often listened to the Christian minister, and his appeals to my conscience made me tremble on my seat; I had frequent invitations to join the Christian Church, and there was a door of honourable usefulness open to my view; but all these talents I undervalued, all these advantages I misimproved. I wasted my early days in pleasure and in sin; I neglected the improvement of my mind; I spurned from me the advice of friends; I was self-willed and obstinate, and was resolved to pursue my own course." Oh, will not the condemnation of that Christian child be far greater, think you, than that of either of those heathen children whose cases we have here supposed? What God will say to *them* we know not; but terrible will be the frown that will light on *him*, and fearful the doom he will hear pronounced. His responsibilities being so much greater than theirs, the guilt which will attach itself to him will be of untold magnitude, and his punishment, like Cain's, greater than he can bear.

It is this one fact, that their responsibilities are proportionate to their privileges, which we are solicitous to impress on the minds of our young friends. Righteous and equitable are all God's ways. He is not a hard master, as some would represent Him, reaping where

He has not sowed, and gathering where He has not strawed; but where He *has* sowed He expects to reap, where He *has* strawed He expects to gather. Just as the husbandman who, with considerable pains, has prepared his field for the reception of the seed, and afterwards sown it with a liberal hand, looks in due time for a corresponding harvest; so, wherever God has scattered the blessings of his providence and grace, He expects an equivalent return, and only then will He say to his servants, "Well done," and give to them a full reward. Oh, happy is that youth who, being favoured with the blessings of a Christian home and a Christian education, looks upon his privileges as so many talents committed to his trust by his Father who is in heaven, and therefore applies himself assiduously to the task of improving them to the utmost of his power! For on all his efforts, feeble though they often are, Heaven will ever smile, and the more so if he has to contend with difficulties and discouragements, but manfully resolves to grapple with them all. Every talent he improves increases his abilities, and multiplies his means. Though he begins with one, he will soon have two, and the two will become five, and the five ten; nor can we assign any limit to the attainments he will realize, or the stores of knowledge he will one day gain. We would have each reader to ask himself, "With how many talents has God intrusted me? What are my advantages—my privileges—my responsibilities?" and whether he has one, or two, or five, we would have him set to work with a brave heart and a persevering spirit to use and to increase them; and though it may appear to him for a while as if he were working in a mine, down which not a ray of light can reach him, yet, ere long, he will rise higher and yet higher, until the mine is left behind, and he begins to

build in the full light of day, a superstructure which will go on increasing until his work is done.

There is no greater incentive to effort than a deep sense of our responsibilities to God, and of the extent of our responsibilities in proportion to our privileges. When all other motives to diligence fail, this will be found, if in active operation, sufficient to carry us through every difficulty. And which of our readers cannot comprehend it? Which of them is so ignorant as not to understand the force of our remarks? There are few, we believe, of the youth of Methodism on whose minds these lessons have not been previously enforced, and fewer still who when they are set before them, are unable to appreciate them and to admit their truth.

But to aid them yet further, we shall attempt to point out in the following section how their responsibilities may be met,—how their talents may be best improved.

SECTION III.

RESPONSIBILITIES—HOW TO MEET THEM.

“The glorious privilege to do
Is man's most noble dower.
Oh! to your birthright and yourselves,
To your own souls be true:
A weary, wretched life is theirs
Who have no work to do.”—C. . OMME.

AMONG the beautiful parables of Krummacher is the following:—

“A father had three sons, with whom he lived on a large island. He always provided for them and for their children, that they never suffered want. But when he felt his end drawing nigh, he called his sons and said to them, ‘I must leave you now, for the hour of my departure is come; now you must provide for your own wants, as I have provided for you hitherto. You may no more remain together,—you must go forth to the east, to the west, and to the south; but each of you take these grains of seed, and keep them carefully. And when I shall be no more with you, choose a piece of ground, and plough the land, that it may be fit to receive sunshine and rain. When you have done this, sow the seeds and cover them with earth; then you will reap fruit in abundance for your sustenance and enjoyment. Watch and guard the field well, that the wild beasts may not enter and destroy it.’

"After the father had spoken thus, he died, and they buried him.

"Then the sons separated, and went, as their father had commanded them, to different parts of the island, taking the seed with them.

"When the eldest son arrived at the part allotted to him, he took the seed which his father had given him, and said, 'Why should I do this wrong to the earth, and labour to pierce her breast with the iron of the plough? The sun will not fail to warm, and the rain to moisten her, that she may bring forth fruit.' Then he strewed the seed on the hard ground; but it did not grow, nor yield any fruit. So the eldest son was wroth, and forgot the gift of his father.

"The second son went towards the south. When he arrived at the place where he should dwell, he saw that it was a very pleasant place, and he said in his heart, 'Why should I take the trouble to till the ground, so long as the land yields of itself provision in abundance?' And he threw the seed aside and left it. After he had consumed the fruit of the land he sowed the seed of his father; but it grew not, for the worms had gnawed it, and he sowed nothing but the husks. Then he scorned the gift of his father, and forgot it.

"But the youngest son did as his father had commanded him. He chose the best ground, manured and dug it with great care, made a fence all round, and sowed the seed. Then the seed put forth blades, and grew, and yielded fruit, sixty fold and an hundred fold. This he did for several successive years, and his fields increased in number, and the harvests were more and more plentiful; and he and his children and grandchildren had abundance.

"After some years, when the elder brothers were in

want and poverty, and heard of the riches of their younger brother, they went to him, and saw the fields round about covered with rich ears and sheaves ; and they heard the merry shouts of the reapers in the fields, for it was the time of harvest.

“ Then the brothers were astonished, and said to each other, ‘ We have done wrong in despising the gift of our father.’ ”

This story is suggestive of several lessons, some of which will teach us how to employ our talents, and thus to meet our solemn responsibilities. Precious seed has been entrusted to our care, not that we may waste it, not that we may suffer it to be destroyed, but that we may make the most of it ; and whilst enjoying the fruit of our labours ourselves, be prepared to give a satisfactory account to our Father who is in heaven, and who has entrusted us with the seed. The father of these young men died, and could not, therefore, inquire of them what they had done with the seed ; but *our* Father—our Father who is in heaven—lives, and, as we have already seen, He holds us responsible for His gifts, and will require us to give an account of our stewardship.

We must learn to value the gifts bestowed on us. The two sons despised the gift of their father, saying to themselves, as we may suppose, “ He has only given us a few grains of seed ; ” and one threw the gift away, whilst the other allowed it to be eaten by the worms. Only a few grains of seed ! But in those few grains of seed what treasures were contained ! what blessings were included, when, as in the case of the younger son, they were properly employed ! He reaped a plentiful harvest from them the first year in which they were sown, and in subsequent years his stores increased abundantly, so that he had more than enough to supply all his children

with food. Never despise your privileges or blessings, be they apparently ever so small. The youth who says, I have only such-and-such things entrusted to my care, and who, because they are no more, squanders them away or misemploys them, is in the high road to certain ruin, and will no more be able to meet his responsibilities than the most wasteful prodigal or the most thoughtless spendthrift. And yet we often see young people acting in this way. Divine Providence has bestowed upon them certain privileges,—a Christian home, and the means of obtaining religious instruction in a day or Sabbath-school; but because their home is not an affluent one, or because they have not the means of going to a college, they despise their advantages and neglect to improve them. “*Only* a mother’s prayers! *only* a father’s kind advice! *only* the opportunity of attending a Sunday-school!” The youth who will say this, or who undervalues any of the privileges with which he is favoured, will soon be disposed to trifle with them and abuse them; and then, instead of being prepared to render up a good account, he will stand condemned by his own conscience as well as by the law of God. Let the youthful reader despise nothing,—not a single blessing he enjoys,—not a single privilege with which he is favoured. Let him not despise one word of kind instruction, of solemn warning, or of faithful admonition. Let him not despise the Sabbath or the sanctuary, the Book of God, or any portion of it. These are the talents committed to his trust, and every one of them is like a seed, in which, small as it is, there is the germ of an incalculable amount of good. The world is made up of little things, and on a due regard to them the highest interests of men very frequently depend. Observe that noble barque tossed upon the mountain wave. She is near the coast, and her

captain is afraid of being dashed upon the rocks. But he sees in the distance a speck of light, darting through the gloom of the surrounding night. What says he? Does he say it is too small to be worth notice? No; he observes it carefully, and, ere long, it proves to be the friendly lighthouse, erected for the very purpose of giving warning to the voyager, and of teaching him how to steer his vessel, so as to avoid the land. Observe that miner. He is going down into the mine, many fathoms below the surface of the earth; and there is given to him a safety-lamp, which he is told he must take with him. Does he look at it with contempt, and ask of what use can so small a lamp as that be to me? No; he knows that down in the mine there is inflammable air, and that, small as that lamp is, and feeble as is its light, it is the only one that he can take to aid him in his work, without any danger of a fatal explosion. Were the mariner to despise the lighthouse, because it sheds such a feeble light, he would run his vessel on the rocks; and were the miner to despise his lamp, because it is so small and its light so dim, he would expose himself to the peril of almost instant death. And a thousand other illustrations might be given of the principle we have named, that momentous interest hangs on little things, and that from little things momentous benefits may flow.

"He that contemneth small things," says an apocryphal writer, "shall fall by little and little." Despise not, then, the least of your privileges; neglect not to improve the smallest of your blessings. If you learn to value little things you will soon obtain greater, for you will learn to discharge your responsibilities both to man and God, and your labour will bring with it its own reward.

We must not depend upon the spontaneousness of the

soil. The eldest son, in the above parable, strewed his seed on the hard ground, thinking it unnecessary to use the plough; and the second son did not sow his seed at all, because he fancied the ground would yield abundance of itself! How foolish was their conduct! The very best soil needs to be sown with good seed, if we would render it really productive; and, before it is sown, it needs to be prepared for the reception of the seed,—to be broken up by the ploughshare and the harrow,—that the seed may take root, and not perish. But there are many who act a similar part to these two youths. Their own minds are given them to cultivate, and they are entrusted with the precious seeds of truth to deposit in those minds. But they fancy themselves possessed of natural genius, and they think that *their* minds are of such a superior order that they will bring forth abundant fruit of themselves, or at least that the ordinary circumstances of life will be quite sufficient to develop the faculties they possess, without the trouble of reading and of study. What is the result? They grow up in ignorance, and when, ere long, they find out their error, if, indeed, they do find it out, it is too late to correct the evil, for their minds have become like the trodden-down pathway, which the seed will not enter, or occupied with weeds and briars, among which it will not grow.

Spontaneous enough are the minds of many, but it is of noxious weeds which spring up in such abundance that, if not checked and rooted up, will take the entire possession of the soil, leaving no room for the growth of what is good. Even if a youth has genius equal to that of a Byron or an Edgar Allan Poe, it needs cultivation, or otherwise it will run wild with deadly plants which will entwine themselves around its noblest powers, and prevent their growth. The instances are very few

in which genius left to itself has produced good and lasting fruit; but they are many in which it has produced fruit more poisonous than the nightshade. The writings, for example, of some men of genius, whose minds, in early youth, were either wholly uncultivated, or, what is still worse, were trained in error, will be productive of mischief to mankind, as long as a copy of them exists. Who can calculate the amount of evil that one only of the works of Byron we might name, full as it is of the fire of genius, has been the means of originating in the human mind? Genius! It is a noble faculty; it is a wondrous power; but, in instances innumerable, it has either run to waste or has been prostituted to purposes the most dishonourable.

But genius is a rare thing, after all, and many who think they possess it, and whose friends, too, think they possess it, are mistaken. Talent, perhaps, they do possess, which, if carefully cultivated, will prove more valuable than mines of wealth; but genius they do not. The two things are very different. "Genius is originality in intellectual construction; talent is the faculty of employing what has been furnished by others." * The former is bestowed on comparatively few, the latter is conferred on very many. Yet foolish parents often say of children who, in early life, display retentiveness of memory or aptitude of thought, "Here are signs of genius; we must be careful what we do, lest we should check its development and growth!" And they think, and lead their children to think, that their minds will expand with but little cultivation; and hence the work of ploughing up the fallow ground and casting in the seed, is all but let alone. But even if a child is endowed with this high

* Coleridge in "The Friend."

faculty, neither his intellectual nor his moral training ought to be neglected; and if it should turn out that, though quick, and thoughtful, and somewhat clever, genius is wanting, after all, there is the greater need of the utmost care and diligence in the culture of his mind, and the work of sowing in it the seeds of truth can only be neglected at the utmost peril.

We believe that many a youth has failed to discharge his solemn responsibilities, in consequence of the error of which we now speak. He has fancied himself in possession of a superior mind, which needed little or no culture, and he has allowed the precious seed which he ought to have received into it to lie disregarded, or to be used by others; and, when the time has come for gathering in the fruits, and presenting his account to God, he has had nothing to produce but thorns, and briars, and noxious weeds. How many students in our academies and colleges are in danger here! In the pride of their hearts they think themselves so much superior in natural endowments to many who surround them, that, though it may be needful for their compeers to ply the daily task, and burn the midnight lamp, they need not do it, for knowledge is almost intuitive to them, and with very little pains they will soon rise to eminence, and outshine all others. But ah! the old fable of the tortoise and the hare meets with its moral here; for just as the hare, though swift, was left behind, because, depending on her superior powers, she slept, so these students find themselves left far behind by some whom they considered, and who perhaps were, their inferiors in mental power.

Let our youth then guard against this error, and let none of them suppose that they are possessed of minds which need no culture, and which will bring forth of

themselves valuable and wholesome fruit. Even the mind of the illustrious Sir Isaac Newton, who has been pronounced the greatest genius the world ever saw, needed cultivation, and only when it received the seeds of truth did its latent powers burst forth.

We must be ever watchful against the spirit of indolence. The second of the two sons, in the parable we have quoted, would not give himself the trouble to till the ground, and this is the secret of the neglect of the talents with which they are entrusted in the case of many; they are too indolent to cultivate their minds, too slothful to make proper use of their gifts, and hence their responsibilities are forgotten until it becomes too late to discharge them.

Few young people are naturally industrious. Here and there we meet with a youth who from his childhood loved to be employed in some way; but in the majority of instances the young are pre-disposed to idleness, and do not like to give themselves any trouble. Very different are they from the insect of which Watts has sung so sweetly—the busy bee, who flits from flower to flower, the live-long day, gathering the honey with which to store her nest; and very different from another insect to which Solomon sends the sluggard that he may consider her ways and be wise. What are her ways—the ways of the tiny ant? “Having no guide, overseer, or ruler,” yet “she provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest.” Some species of ants build habitations so large that they appear in the distance like sheep, but which are hillocks of earth, and which, in Africa and elsewhere, are spread over the plains in vast numbers. These, it is said, they store with food, and naturalists tell us that they are divided into rooms and compartments, which some of the inhabitants guard

whilst others travel in search of provisions. These little creatures also form roads along which they pass and re-pass, and in their journeys they travel in companies, climbing over walls, crossing rivers, and performing some of the most wondrous feats. A single ant will often drag to a considerable distance a piece of straw, or an insect much bigger than itself; or if it should prove too large for its strength will fetch another ant to assist it. The perseverance of this little creature is equally astonishing, so that on one occasion it led to very important results, which affected a large portion of this habitable globe; for the celebrated conqueror, Timour, being once forced to take shelter from his enemies in a ruined building, where he sat alone many hours, and being desirous of diverting his mind from his hopeless condition, fixed his observation upon an ant that was carrying a grain of corn, larger than itself, up a high wall. Numbering the efforts that it made to accomplish this object, he found that the grain fell sixty-nine times to the ground, but the seventieth time it reached the top of the wall. "This sight," said Timour, "gave me courage at the moment, and I have never forgotten the lesson it conveyed."

Well, then, might Solomon, who had perhaps carefully observed the habit of these insects, send the slug-gard to their school, and well would it be if those young people who are disposed to indolence would take Solomon's advice, and study in that school until they are ashamed of themselves. Will any of our readers be out-done in industry by a little creature that they can tread to dust, and a thousand of which will lie in an infant's hand? Most assuredly the indolent do not meet their responsibilities, and hence the servant, in our Lord's parable, who buried his talent, was charged with this

fault—that he was “a wicked and slothful servant;” and his talent was taken from him and given to another. “I went by the vineyard of the slothful,” says Solomon, “and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. Then I saw and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction. Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep; so shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man.” (Prov. xxiv. 30—34.) A true picture this, which may be seen almost every day. Many of our youth are, we fear, allowing the vineyard of their minds to lie neglected and to be overrun with thorns and nettles, instead of planting there “rich seeds to blossom in their manhood and bear fruit when they are old.” How will they be prepared either for positions of usefulness in after life, or for the reckoning day, which all must meet? The misspent past can never be recalled. “Life is like a transition from class to class in a school. The schoolboy who has not learnt arithmetic in the earlier classes cannot secure it when he comes to mechanics in the higher; each section has its own sufficient work. He may be a good philosopher, or a good historian; but a bad arithmetician he remains for life; for he cannot lay the foundation when he must be building the superstructure.” So says one from whom we before quoted; and very solemn is the fact which he affirms, that “Youth has its irreparable past.” The days you are now living you can never live over again, and hence if you trifle, if you slumber, if you while-away time in foolish pleasure, it will glide away from you like the streamlet at your feet, and in a future day you will regret the loss of it in vain.

We should like our young readers to imitate the conduct of the third son in the parable, who chose the best ground, manured and dug it, made a fence all round, and sowed the seed. We should like them, in other words, to be thoughtful, industrious, and persevering; for by these means only will they be able to meet their responsibilities and to render up to God a satisfactory account. Now then,—now; in the bloom of youth and in the vigour of your days begin to work, for

“ So should we live, that every hour
May die, as dies the natural flower,—
A self-reviving thing of power;
That every thought and every deed
May hold within itself the seed
Of future good and future meed;
Esteeming sorrow, whose employ
Is to develop, not destroy,
Far better than a barren joy.”

PART THE THIRD.

The Duties of the Youth of Methodism.

“IT IS GOD HIMSELF THAT HAS PLACED US ON THE EARTH, AND IT IS HE WHO WILLS THAT ALL OUR THOUGHTS SHOULD BE IN HEAVEN. IT IS GOD WHO HAS PLACED US, BY OUR BODIES, OUR WANTS, OUR FACULTIES, IN A CLOSE AND NECESSARY RELATION WITH THE WORLD; YET IT IS HE WHO WISHES TO BIND OUR HEARTS TO ETERNITY BY INDESTRUCTIBLE TIES. IT IS HE WHO ADMITS OF NO DIVISION, NO COMPROMISE, AND PROPOSES TO US THE CHOICE BETWEEN HEAVEN AND EARTH, AS A CHOICE BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH.”—*A. Vinet.*

SECTION I.

PERSONAL RELIGION.

"Ye hearts with youthful vigour warm
In smiling crowds draw near,
And turn from every mortal charm
A Saviour's voice to hear.
He, Lord of all the world on high,
Stoops to converse with you ;
And lays his radiant glories by,
Your friendship to pursue."—DODDRIDGE.

It is quite possible to possess the highest religious privileges and to be laid under the most solemn religious obligations, and yet to be negligent of religious duties, and strangers, experimentally, to religious enjoyments. Piety is not hereditary. The children of God's people come into the world with a depraved nature, and, notwithstanding all the efforts which are made to rectify it, that depraved nature frequently becomes still more depraved as months and years roll on. Many are the sad instances on record of young people who were surrounded in their childhood with the most healthful influences, with the atmosphere of prayer and the light of truth, with the warmth of parental affection and the drawings of the Spirit of God, who have, nevertheless, become thoughtless, profligate, and wicked, and, perhaps, brought down the grey hairs of a father or a mother with sorrow to the grave.

Of this fact, the following sad and affecting story, from the Autobiography of the Rev. W. Jay, furnishes a painful illustration:—"A fine youth, the son of a Christian minister," says Mr. Jay, "became acquainted with some sceptical, or, as by a patent of their own creation they call themselves, free-thinking young men, gave up the Sabbath, forsook the house of God which his father had built, abandoned the minister to whom he had been greatly attached, and boldly 'left off to be wise and do good.' But as his fall was rapid so his new course was short. Swimming on a Sunday for amusement and experiment he caught a chill which brought on a consumption. This for months gave him warning and space for repentance, but it is to be feared the grace of God was in vain. During his gradual decline he refused all intercourse with pious friends and ministers, and when his good nurse entreated him to call me in, as I lived close by and there had been such an intimacy between us, he frowned and rebuked her, and ordered her to mind her own business. On the last day of his life, unasked, I ventured into his dying chamber. He was sensible, but exclaimed, 'O Voltaire! Voltaire!' He then raised himself up in the bed, and wringing his hands, again exclaimed, 'Oh, that young man! Oh, that young man!' I said, 'My dear Sir, what young man?' With a countenance indescribable, he answered, 'I will not tell you.' He suddenly expired."

Wonder not, then, youthful reader, that we address you on the subject of personal religion. We place it first among the duties which we would urge on your attention, because it stands at the threshold and demands your immediate consideration. To secure and to practise it, is, in fact, the one great business of your life.

What is personal religion? Let us trace it up to its

source, and observe it in its rise and progress. It is somewhat like a river, the springs of which are hidden in the mountains, and which, though small and feeble at the first, gradually swells into a beautiful and flowing tide; and which, though it experiences a few windings, meets with a few hindrances, and rolls over a few shallows, still pursues its way until it reaches the mighty sea. Personal religion owes its origin in every instance to the grace of God illuminating the mind, awakening the conscience, and exciting the sinner to penitence and prayer. And how early, in many cases, does the Holy Spirit begin to move upon the heart! how soon, after reason dawns on the understanding, does the gentle dew descend upon the soul, and the sun's bright beams animate the breast! "I cannot tell when the Spirit first began to strive with me," we have heard many a Christian remark; and can you, dear reader, say when the light of grace first shone upon your youthful mind? No; it was so very early, that you could not comprehend it. You heard, as it were, a voice speaking to you in the silence of the night, but you knew not what it was; and perhaps with a full heart, you went to your dear mother, who had taught you to pray to God, and said, "O I am a sinner, and I am afraid to die: do pray for me that my sins may be forgiven." Have you cherished those gracious feelings? "No man can come unto me," said Jesus Christ, "except the Father which hath sent me draw him;" *these* were the drawings of the Father—have you yielded to them or resisted them?—given yourself up to them, or repelled them from your breast?

It is very important to consider this question, for we fear that there are some young people who entertain a notion that because they are the children of pious parents their conversion is sure to take place some time, and that,

therefore, they need not give themselves much anxiety about it. But oh! if you never yield to the drawings of the Spirit, *it will not take place*. Though many prayers may be offered on your behalf—prayers mingled with tears—prayers which God would delight to answer; yet if you grieve and vex the Holy Spirit, who, partly on account of those prayers, awakens in your breasts gracious feelings and good desires, you will never be admitted into the family of God, nor be made happy in the enjoyment of his smile and favour.

Do you ask, then, What shall we do? Our answer is first, repent of sin and break off all your follies and transgressions. Repentance is not religion, nor, strictly speaking, a part of religion; but it is an essential step towards the attainment of it, and it is therefore enjoined on every one who would flee from the wrath to come. Perhaps you have not been guilty of gross and open violations of God's law; perhaps the influence of parental example, and of your early religious training, has, in connexion with restraining grace, kept you back from many of the sins to which young people are frequently addicted; yet if you look into your own breast you will find, in the evil tempers and dispositions which you have indulged, cause sufficient for deep sorrow before God; and perhaps a narrow inspection of your comparatively short life will also reveal to you many acts of wilful transgression of the Divine law. These you must confess; on account of these you must mourn; for these you must be deeply humbled at the throne of grace. And if you have done evil you must cease to do it. Youthful lusts must be crucified; wicked practices must be shunned; ungodly companions must be forsaken. You must be willing to abandon all sin and to give yourselves up to God without the least reserve. You must

come to the footstool of Divine mercy with some such prayer as that which is put into the lips of the penitent in Doddridge's "Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul." "O God! thou injured Sovereign! thou all penetrating and Almighty Judge! what shall I say to this charge? Shall I pretend I am wronged by it, and stand on the defence in thy presence? I dare not do it; for 'thou knowest my foolishness, and none of my sins are hid from thee.' My conscience tells me that a denial of my crimes would only increase them, and add new fuel to the fire of thy deserved wrath. 'If I justify myself, mine own mouth will condemn me; if I say I am perfect, it will also prove me perverse.' 'For innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up: they are (as I have been told in thy Word) more than the hairs of my head, and therefore my heart faileth me.' I am more guilty than it is possible for another to declare or represent. My heart speaks more than any other accuser. 'And thou, O Lord, art much greater than my heart, and knowest all things.' And how am I astonished that thy forbearance is still continued! It is 'because thou art God, and not man.' Had I, a sinful worm, been thus injured, I could not have endured it. Had I been a prince, I had long since done justice on any rebel, whose crimes had borne but a distant resemblance to mine. Had I been a parent, I had long since cast off the ungrateful child who had made such return as I have all my life long been making to thee, O thou Father of my spirit. Why, then, O Lord, am I not 'cast out from thy presence'? Why am I not sealed up under an irreversible sentence of destruction? That I live, I owe to thine indulgence. But oh! if there be yet any way of deliverance, if there be yet any hope

for so guilty a creature, may it be opened upon me by thy Gospel and thy grace! And if any further alarm, humiliation, or terror, be necessary to my security and salvation, may I meet them, and bear them all! Wound my heart, O Lord, so that thou wilt afterwards heal it; and break it in pieces, if thou wilt but at length bind it up."

Can you adopt this language, dear youthful reader, and is your mind in a truly penitent state? Then, as another step towards the attainment of personal religion, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; or, in other words, trust in the merits of his death for pardon and acceptance. No repentance, however deep, sincere, or long-protracted, can ever wash away your sins. No tears you can shed, no sacrifices you can offer, no penances you can undergo, can meet the claims of Divine justice, or repair the broken law. Even if you had the power to amend your life, so as from this moment never to commit another sinful act or indulge another sinful thought, you could not atone for the transgressions which already lie at your door. But, behold that Cross! There hangs upon it One who never sinned,—the Son of man,—the Son of God! and there He sustains the load of your iniquities; there He suffers in your room and stead; there He satisfies, on your behalf, the claims of a violated law. Go to Him. Cast your soul upon the merits of His sacrifice. Claim Him as your Saviour. Cling to Him as your only hope. He will hear you; He will accept you; for He has said, "him that cometh unto me I will in nowise cast him out." Cheering words!—"I will in nowise cast him out." It was this promise that sustained the mind of one whose life had been spent in sin and folly, but who, being suddenly awakened as from a deep slumber, was brought almost to the verge of despair.

Let it encourage you, and let nothing—the world, Satan, your own hearts, or the deep conviction of your unworthiness and guilt—deter you from venturing your all on the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world.

This is faith,—faith in Christ,—that faith which every one must exercise ere he can obtain internal peace. It is very simple, very child-like; so much so that some, overlooking its simplicity, say that they cannot understand it, and complain of it as something incomprehensible and mysterious. We have heard many people make this complaint, and some have even said, “We cannot believe; we have not power to believe; we know not how to believe.” Does the youthful reader thus complain? Why should he? He can believe in his earthly father; and when that father is far away from home in a distant land, and sends a letter to his children telling them that he loves them still, and that he hopes to see them again ere long, he does not find it difficult to believe what his father says. Is it more difficult to believe in our heavenly Father,—that He loves us,—that His Son died for us,—that He is willing and ready to forgive us, though we have done wrong? True, an impenitent sinner cannot believe this, for he has no warrant to believe it, and his belief of it would be presumption, not faith. But to every penitent sinner the warrant to believe is given, and the power to believe vouchsafed; and he has but to exercise that power, and presently he will feel himself on the Eternal Rock. O come, young friends, to the loving Saviour! He waits to accept you. He is ready to welcome you. He lifts before you his hands and points you to his open side. He says to you, in accents sweeter and more gentle than the tenderest

mother could employ, "Come unto Me, and I will receive you; come unto Me, and I will give you rest."

What follows on the exercise of faith in Christ? A consciousness of pardon, a sense of the Divine favour, a glow of holy love on the altar of the soul, enkindled by the fire from heaven, and destined to become warmer, purer, holier, through all time and for ever. Now it is that personal religion actually begins,—that experimental and practical piety takes its rise. Now the new course of life is entered upon; and now, in the possession of peace with God, a disburdened conscience, a regenerated nature, and a loving heart, the young disciple of the meek and lowly One pursues his way. How blessed are the feelings of the new-born child of God!

"The godly grief, the pleasing smart,
The meltings of a broken heart;
The tears that tell his sins forgiven,
The sighs that waft his soul to heaven;
The guiltless shame, the sweet distress,
The unutterable tenderness;
The genuine, meek humility;
The wonder 'Why such love to me.'"

We doubt not that some of our youthful readers have tasted of these joys; but there are others, perhaps, who cannot bear testimony to a sense of the Divine favour, and who cannot say with confidence that they have been born of the Spirit from above. They do not neglect prayer; they love the house of God; they take pleasure in reading and in studying the Scriptures; and, in addition to all this, there is in them much that is amiable in disposition, gentle in manners, and affectionate in spirit; but they cannot call God their Father by the Spirit given unto them, nor look up to heaven as their future home: and were they to sicken, and were eternity

to open on their view, there would be "a dim uncertainty" in their minds relative to the future, if not positive fear and dread. Now, in addressing such of our readers, we can scarcely find words and expressions sufficiently strong with which to urge upon them the momentous importance of seeking until they attain these lofty privileges. Nothing short of them will place you on the rock, standing upon which you will be able to defy the impending storm. "Ye must be born again." There is no substitute for personal conversion, and it takes place only through the exercise of personal trust in the mercy of God revealed to us in the Gospel of his Son.

Do any ask, But were we not regenerated in our baptism? This is our reply; you were received by your baptism into the Church of Christ, and we doubt not that the rite was no unmeaning one, but that the Holy Spirit gave to you, in connexion with it, a measure of his grace; yet if, as we doubt not is the fact, you have, since your baptism, become actual transgressors of the law of God, you have still need to undergo this vital change, for the fact of your having committed known and wilful sin is a proof that you do not possess the new nature or the new name.

But have our readers, indeed, "passed from death unto life?" Then will they bring forth the fruits of the Spirit—"love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance;" and never do those fruits appear more beautiful than in the young disciple of the Lord Jesus, for they are the true adornment of the soul and of the mind,

"Than gold or pearls more costly far,
And brighter than the morning star."

We have seen the young and tender vine which the

gardener has trained with considerable care and skill, and there has been such a freshness in its leaves and such a richness in the appearance of its fruit, that though the older vines have looked much stronger and their clusters of grapes have been larger and riper, we have surveyed the former with equal pleasure, and have found that the vine-dresser took in them great delight. It is so in regard to youthful Christians. On them the Church looks with peculiar satisfaction, and watches the development of their minds, and their growth in wisdom and in holiness, with the deepest interest.

It must not be forgotten, however, that even in the regenerated nature these fruits of the Spirit will not grow without culture and without care. We meet with many young people, respecting whose conversion we can scarcely doubt; but whose piety is not healthy, vigorous, and manly, and who are, therefore, no credit to the Church in which they have been reared. For, instead of adorning their profession and being ornaments of society, they are either gay and trifling, or sullen and morose, and hence the world thinks little of their religion, and is disposed to doubt whether it is a reality. To what are the defects in their piety to be traced? They are to be traced to the want of the cultivation of the fruits of righteousness,—to the neglect of prayer and the ordinances of religion,—and to that slothful spirit which we have already condemned, and which invariably stunts the growth of the Christian, so that he remains a mere “babe in Christ” as long as he is under its baneful influence. We would have our young people aim at eminence in their profession. We would have them “leave the first principles of the doctrine of Christ and go on unto perfection.” Let them not be always children, but let them aspire to the dignity of young men in Christ

Jesus. Their piety should be so decided, that no one may be able to question its reality; so bright and luminous, that no one may be able to doubt its origin; so vigorous and manly, that no one may be able to shake its confidence.

In one of the beautiful prayers of St. Paul he asks that Christian believers may be "rooted and grounded in love." Love the soil in which they are planted, he is anxious that they should be like the tree whose roots have firm hold, or like a building whose foundations are laid deep and broad. But there are many, especially among the young, who, though planted in the soil of love, have such feeble hold of it, that instead of being like the sturdy oak, or the lofty pine, or the graceful cedar, which can defy the storm, are like the feeble reed which bends and breaks before the slightest breeze; or, instead of being like the lofty tower whose foundations are so strong that, though it seems to touch the sky, it is unshaken by the winter's blast, are like a building based upon the sand, which, when the winds blow and the rain descends, soon falls, and is washed away. O for more stability and firmness! It is the want of this that leads to so many fatal falls, and that swells, from time to time, the catalogue of wanderers from the fold of Christ. Let our young people get "rooted and grounded in love." Let them be satisfied with nothing but genuine religion, and that of the most eminent and lofty character. Let them guard against all those chilling influences which tend to nip the tender plant as soon as it grows up; and let them be specially careful to shun the atmosphere which would cause their piety to languish and their souls to droop.

Do we advocate, then, a spirit of ostentation in the religious profession of the young? Far from it. Some

of our sweetest flowers bloom in the garden almost unseen, and were it not for the fragrance they exhale we should scarcely know that they were there. So may it be, so should it be, with the youthful Christian. His piety should be of such a character that, like the violet or the primrose, he should diffuse a heavenly odour all around him, yet without parade or show. True religion has no need of ostentation. There is about her something which cannot be hid, and therefore she does not require the aid of superfluous ornament to set her forth and make her conspicuous in the eyes of men. The young Christian should not talk about his piety, but exemplify it in his conduct and his life. A profession of religion he must make, but it should be humbly, and in a retiring spirit, seeking only the praise of God and not the praise of men.

The young should also cultivate a happy, cheerful piety. Religion is not designed to make us sad and melancholy, nor does it require us to shut ourselves out from all society, to retire into a convent, or to take the monastic vow. It sanctifies life, and all its relationships, and it opens to the soul new sources of pleasure and enjoyment of the purest and most elevated kind. "If we become religious," say some young people, "we must bid farewell to all our pleasures, and must become demure, and grave, and sad." To *sinful* pleasures they must bid farewell, it is true; but has Divine Providence furnished no *innocent* pleasures for his creatures? Must we needs, in order to be happy, violate God's holy laws? Let us listen to Solomon on this subject. "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding, for the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies; and all the

things thou canst desire are not to be compared to her. Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." (Prov. iii. 13—17.) Yes, dear youthful reader, religion was designed, and is eminently calculated, to make you happy. What sources of pleasure does she forbid you to repair to which are not injurious to your highest interests? Not those of nature, for she teaches you to study nature, and points you, through it, to its great Original and Lord. Not those of literature and science, for she ennobles these, and makes use of them in support of her highest claims on the homage and affection of mankind. Not those of poetry and art, for she presents themes for the poet's pen, and subjects for the painter's pencil, of the sublimest character; and some of her most eminent disciples have poured forth strains of loftiest verse, and have filled the canvas with the noblest conceptions. Religion denies to you none of these pleasures, and she opens up to you besides a thousand more. To every youth she takes into her school, she says, "Be happy!" and she rejoices to see her children gladsome as the lark when he rises from his grassy bed and mounts on the wing towards heaven.

Cultivate, then, a cheerful piety. Be serious, but not sad. Be thoughtful, but not melancholy. Let that flow of spirits which usually characterizes the young be laid under a little restraint, but let it not be wholly checked as if you thought it were a sin to laugh or smile. Rather let it have vent in songs of joy and praise, and let it enliven all around you, cheering every breast, and making lighter every heart. Blessed is the influence which a happy Christian, whether young or old, may shed upon the circle in which he moves. Like gleams of sunshine

on a cloudy day, he may light up many a home of sorrow, and cause gladness and rejoicing in many a drooping soul. One pious person in a family is often "the angel of the house," whose presence is essential to its peace, and without whom its joys would fade.

SECTION II.

CHURCH FELLOWSHIP.

"O, sweet it is, through life's dark way,
In Christian fellowship to move,
Illumed by one unclouded ray,
And one in faith, in hope, in love."

—CHARLOTTE ELIZABETH.

WERE you setting out upon a journey to a distant place, over a somewhat dreary desert, in which there were but few footprints to point you out the road; and did you see, a little way before you, a company of travellers who were journeying to the same place, having with them an unerring guide and powerful protector; what, dear reader, would you do? Would you not hasten to that company, and ask them to take you under their friendly care, and allow you the privilege of their society? Yes, and if among those travellers there were some of your own relatives, you would join them the more readily and with greater confidence, and happy would you be to find that, instead of having to travel on a lonely path, you would have associates the most agreeable and companionship the most genial and kind.

Now, you *are* setting out upon a journey. If you have obtained, or even if you are seeking, personal religion, you have, like Bunyan's Pilgrim, turned your back on the City of Destruction, and set your face towards

Mount Zion, the "inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." But the journey is a difficult one, and you are comparatively unacquainted with the road. The way is sometimes over the rugged mountain and sometimes through the dreary valley, and there are many by-paths on either hand, which look exceedingly inviting, but which lead to certain destruction and death. There is, however, a large company of travellers, who are prosecuting the journey—the followers of Jesus Christ, whom He Himself has formed into a Church for their mutual help and comfort, and before whom He goes, by a pillar of cloud or of fire, promising to bring them to the land of rest they seek.

Are you a Christian? or do you wish to become one? They ask you to join them, saying, "We are journeying to the place of which the Lord hath said, I will give it you. Come with us, and we will do you good, for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel;" and it is both your privilege and your duty to comply.

It is *your privilege* to join the Church of Christ. In one sense, indeed, you belong to it already. You were admitted into it by your baptism, in which solemn rite you were presented to Christ and to his people by your parents and by the Christian minister, and by which you became entitled to a name and a place within the family of God on earth. Hence, unless you repudiate that baptism,—unless you are unwilling, now that you have arrived at a responsible age, to renounce the vows which were then made on your behalf, you have a right to claim the blessings which belong to you, and to say to the Church, "I am one of your children, and I need your help, your counsels, and your prayers; permit me to sit at your board, to take shelter under your wing, and to

prosecute life's journey under your direction ;" and gladly will the Church admit your plea, and open wide her arms to take you to her breast. Like a fond parent who watches over her child from its infancy, observes with unspeakable pleasure the first dawnings of reason in its mind, teaches its lips to offer prayer, and is glad when she sees that her efforts to train it in the right way have not proved altogether fruitless, the Church has already taken great care of you ; and now, if you acknowledge her as your foster-mother, she will rejoice over you with joy, she will still watch over you and guide you, and, under her kind guardianship you shall be preserved from Satan's wiles and from the allurements and temptations of the world.

But it is equally *your duty* to join the Church of Christ. It is your duty, that is, openly and publicly to take upon you your baptismal vows, or rather to renew them, first by presenting yourself at the table of the Lord, and there partaking of the emblems of his death and sacrifice ; and secondly, by joining yourself to the society of God's people for fellowship and prayer. Some would have the young convert join the society before he sought admission to the table of the Lord ; but we would by no means have him wait until he is a recognised member of it, ere he avails himself of *this* privilege, for every young person who does not wilfully transgress the law of God, and who is in a truly penitent state of mind, has a right, in virtue of his admission into the Church by baptism, to lay claim at once to the benefit of the second sacrament instituted by our Lord ; and no Christian minister will refuse to admit such a young person to that sacrament if he is satisfied that the candidate understands the nature of the ordinance and is

sincere in his desire of becoming a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We have ever thought it one of the most pleasing and gratifying sights we could witness to see young persons, as it has often been our privilege, approaching, for the first time, the sacramental table, and there plighting their vows to Him who bought them with his precious blood. With downcast looks, and tearful eyes, and trembling knees, have they bowed at the Saviour's feet, conscious of their sinfulness, and fearful lest they should eat and drink unworthily; but as the hallowed service has proceeded,—as they have joined in the confession and the prayers,—and as the symbols have been given to them by the hands of the minister, their faith has become stronger, they have discerned the Lord's body, and they have been enabled to rely upon the great atonement with such confidence as they never felt before. And then they have gone away from the table, saying to themselves, "Now the vows of God are upon us, now have we solemnly pledged ourselves to be his servants, and now, therefore, we must be watchful against the world and sin;" and with lighter hearts and firmer steps they have pursued their heavenward course.

Then "shrink not ye, whom to the sacred rite
The altar calls; come early under laws
That can secure for you a path of light
Through gloomiest shade; put on, nor dread its weight,
Armour divine, and conquer in your cause."

You owe it to Him who said, "Do this in remembrance of me;" thus to "confess" Him "before men," and, by your own act and deed, to take upon you those vows which, in your infancy, your parents made on your behalf; and if you refuse or hesitate, it must be either

because you are not sincere in your profession of religion, or that you yield to unbelief and fear.

We assume, of course, that you know something of the nature of this solemn rite. You have been taught to view it, not as a sacrifice for sin, but as a feast commemorative of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ presented once for all,—as a sign or symbol of his death,—and as a means of grace of special benefit to believers, inasmuch as through it they become partakers of Christ's body and blood, or of the true bread which came down from heaven. Let our youth ponder this subject with much thoughtfulness and prayer, and with such views upon it as they are likely to obtain from the teachings of Methodism and its ministers, let them humbly but confidently come to the table of the Lord, and there plight to Him their vows. They have no need to fear, to hesitate, or to doubt. Jesus Himself invites them to come, and when they come He will accept and bless them and will fill them with his grace and peace.

The Lord's Supper is an ordinance which He often deigns to own in a very special manner, and in various ways. It has sometimes been the means of the conversion of persons who have remained to witness its celebration; and, in many instances, penitent seekers of salvation have, whilst receiving it, obtained a sense of their acceptance in the Beloved. "About thirty years ago," says an American minister, "the Supper of the Lord was dispensed at Bermuda, in the Presbyterian Church. A stranger from America was present. He had been residing for some time on the island. He came to the island a gay and thoughtless young man. One evening, in private, it occurred to him,—In what must such a life issue? The thought took deep hold of his mind, and excited the utmost anxiety. His companions

were gay like himself, and he knew no others. He became sick of his former life, but found none to direct him. He secluded himself, and was completely miserable. In various mortifications he expected relief; his severities were excessive; he was emaciated, and his life was in danger. He would have communicated his distress to those who could give him counsel, but where were such? O! where? They were unknown to him. He attended worship at the time and place mentioned; and the solemnity was the most impressive I ever witnessed. The remembrance at this moment is refreshing. The elements had been distributed, and were in the hands of the communicants. All was still. Not a breath could be heard. All felt that they had a deep concern in the death of Christ. A voice broke the silence; it was an unknown voice,—‘*Christ have mercy upon me!*’ It was the voice of the stranger. All again was still as death. The solemnity of the assembly was increased, and their feelings too deep for utterance. The assembly breaking up, some retired rejoicing in the Redeemer, others deeply sensible that they stood in need of a Saviour. The stranger assured me that he was not aware of what he said, his mind was so fully engaged. When he was better instructed concerning the person, character, and office of Christ, he saw a Rock upon which he could build, and, building thereon, he found rest to his soul. He became a zealous and an exemplary Christian. Returning to America, he took orders in the Episcopal Church, and has laboured for many years in the vineyard with acceptance and success.”

Facts similar to the above many a minister could relate; and there are, doubtless, instances innumerable in which this sacrament is honoured, which are known only to the recipients of the blessing. How is it, then,

that Christian professors can neglect this ordinance? and how is it that the young are so unwilling to come to it? Whatever is the cause, they rob themselves of an inestimable privilege, and we can scarcely wonder if they grow up feeble and sickly plants; and if, when storms arise, they wither, droop, and die. We press this duty, then, upon the immediate attention of our readers; and we invite them, if but truly penitent, to seek admission to the Supper of the Lord on the very next occasion of its being administered.

And yet coming to the Lord's table does not constitute Church-membership. In apostolic times it was, we apprehend, not so much a test of Church-membership as a privilege flowing out of it; and so it ought to be in all Churches, as in some it is, in the present day. In the Wesleyan Church, for example, a young person would be admitted to this sacrament *once*, ere he had, as we generally express it, joined the society; but he would be allowed to come *statedly*, only on the condition of his uniting himself with God's people, and submitting to the rules by which they are governed. This, too, is your duty, and this also is your privilege. With some section or other of the Christian Church ought every one who wishes to glorify God and to secure eternal life, to connect himself without delay. Of some in Macedonia St. Paul rejoicingly said, "that they first gave their own selves to the Lord, and *unto us by the will of God*;" and of Paul himself, just after his conversion, it is said that he "*assayed to join himself to the disciples*." He did not wait until he was asked to join them, for, on account of his previous conduct, "they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple;" but he sought to join them, and urged them to accept him, and was at

length, though reluctantly, admitted into their fellowship. He had now become a soldier of the Cross, and he wished to join the army of Immanuel, to wear the badge of a Christian warrior, and to engage in the glorious warfare against the world and sin in connexion with the mighty host of the elect.

And so it should ever be. The youthful convert can do little of himself. Is he a traveller? He will find the way dreary and difficult without companionship, and common prudence will suggest to him the importance of joining himself to others who are journeying to Mount Zion. Is he a soldier? How, single-handed and alone, can he expect to contend successfully with his foes? They are numerous, powerful, and very subtle; and only with the aid of the prayers, counsel, and encouragement of the Church can he hope to conquer.

But there are Christian professors not a few (Christians we cannot call them) who wish, as it would seem, to find out a solitary path to heaven; and there are some who would fain be Christians, and yet make no religious profession openly and before the world. Now this is just as impossible as it would be for a man to become a soldier who should refuse to join the ranks of the army, and should be ashamed to appear in a soldier's uniform. The Captain of our salvation has issued peremptory commands that all his followers shall be joined together in mighty phalanx to assist one another in the struggles in which they are engaged; and their oneness is their strength,—their union is their glory and their boast. True, they are divided into ranks and companies, and are composed of numerous regiments and bodies; but, different though they appear in some respects, they form one vast army and fight under one banner; nor can any

one stand aloof from them and be guiltless ; for he that is not with Christ is against Him, and neutrality in this warfare there is none.

Buckle on then, youthful reader, the armour of the Christian, and go join yourself to the embattled hosts. It is said that when a Highland chieftain summoned his clan on an important emergency, he slew a goat, and making a cross of light wood seared its extremities in the fire, and then extinguished them in the blood of the animal. This was called the Fiery Cross, and being delivered to a swift messenger it was carried from hamlet to hamlet, and at the sight of it every man capable of bearing arms was bound to repair to the place of rendezvous. He who failed to appear was put to death with fire and sword. Now we present to you the Cross of Christ stained with his own blood, which He shed on your behalf, and we call on you to rally round the standard and to join the army which He is leading on to victory. It is at your peril you refuse ; for if you hold back, either from shame or fear, He will disown you, and will ultimately cast you off.

Do our readers ask to what division of the army shall we join ourselves ? or with what section of the Christian Church shall we cast in our lot ? They need not,—they ought not, to hesitate long on this point, if, as we assume, they are already connected by numerous ties to Wesleyan Methodism, for they will find no section of the Church which will take greater pains in promoting their spiritual interests, nor one in which they will be more likely to become valiant soldiers of Jesus Christ. We do not hold that every young person is bound to attach himself to the Church of his fathers ; but if that Church is a scriptural Church, and maintains the doctrines and the discipline of the New Testament, and if, moreover, he has been

baptized by one of her ministers, instructed in her schools, taught her catechisms and her hymns, and been long nourished and strengthened by her ordinances, surely that Church has a claim on his affections, and a right to expect that he will unite himself to her fold. Have you derived these blessings, under God, from Methodism? and have you, through her instrumentality, been made partakers of the Holy Ghost? Then ought you at once to join her ranks, and to do everything in your power to promote her interests. Methodism never attempts to proselytize,—to rob other Churches that she may strengthen herself; but depends, for additions to her members, on the young whom she trains in her families and in her schools, and on the converts she gathers out of the ungodly world. To you, then, she specially looks as her hope in future days; and, as a tender mother, she would fold you in her arms, and carry you in her bosom, and still nourish you with the utmost care.

Yet we would not have you join her by compulsion, but with a willing mind; neither would we have you do it without due deliberation, inquiry, and forethought. We should like our young people to become Methodists on principle. We should like them to understand what they are about,—to count the cost,—to make themselves acquainted, as far as their circumstances will allow, with the principles we hold and the doctrines we preach, that thus they may become intelligent members of the Church, and be able to maintain their ground against all the opposition with which they may be assailed. Nor are we afraid of any tests which they may apply to Methodism, drawn either from Scripture or enlightened reason. Methodism is not a thing of yesterday. It has now been in existence for upwards of a century; and, during that period, it has been subjected to trials the most

severe, and has been attacked on all sides, both by the rich and by the poor, by the learned and by the illiterate, by outward enemies and by enemies within. Yet, like a majestic barque which has outridden many a storm, and is as sound and trustworthy as she ever was, Methodism is still prosecuting its course, and never with greater vigour and success than now. It will bear examination, and the more you know of it the more you will admire it, and the greater will be your confidence in its excellence and stability.

Of many of the children of her people she has, however, had great reason to complain. Some of them have not only abandoned her, but, after having received a liberal education in her schools, have turned and fought against her, joined the ranks of her bitterest enemies, and employed their talents and their learning in attempts to impair her usefulness and success. Whether this be right in the sight of God, we will let our readers say, and we doubt not that the majority of them will answer with an indignant no! It is no more right than it is for a child to rebel against a kind and generous parent; and we fear that the guilt which rests on the heads of many who once belonged to the youth of Methodism, is such as, if not repented of, will one day meet with no slight punishment. There are not a few who, in this world, have reaped the reward of their folly and ingratitude;—not a few who, had they maintained their connexion with Methodism, would now have been occupying honourable positions in society and in the Church, but who, instead of this, are all but lost in penury and want. A young man once presented himself at our door, in the meanest attire, asking for charity, and stating that he was the nephew of a Wesleyan minister. We had reason to believe his story, and he confessed that he him-

self had been brought up among the Methodist people, and that his sin and folly were the sole cause of his distress. O, then, whatever you do, forsake not the Church in which you have been nourished from your infancy! At least, do not oppose her, do not side with her enemies, do not take up arms to fight against her. If, from conscientious motives, you should join some other section of the Church, do not forget the Church of your childhood, but remember her with affection, and never be ashamed to own that you were indebted to her for your early training in the paths of truth. O, fie upon the man, be he who he may, who considers it dishonourable to him to admit that his parents belonged to the people called Methodists, and who is too proud to worship in a Wesleyan sanctuary. Such cases we have known; and we have lamented over them, though less for the sake of Methodism than for that of her ungrateful sons; for theirs is the greatest loss, and theirs the only shame.

"But we object," say some, "to the class-meeting. Everything else in Methodism we admire and love, but the class-meeting we cannot do with, and hence we cannot become Methodists." Did you ever try it, we would ask, for any length of time, so as to become acquainted with its nature and to prove its value? We have seldom heard the class-meeting objected to by a spiritually-minded person who has attended it for a while from right motives; but we have heard numbers testify of the benefits derived from it, and, to young converts especially, it has proved like an enclosure in the garden where they have found shelter from many a storm, and refuge from many a winter's blast. "But I can get to heaven without meeting in class," said a young lady to the Rev. John Smith, in reply to his remarks on this subject. "That was not the way in which your father

got to heaven," he observed. She acknowledged it was not, and from that moment she resolved to take the path by which her father had been conducted to the better land. Is not this a thought worthy of the consideration of many of the youth of Methodism, that the class-meeting proved a valuable means of grace to their sainted parents who have passed into the skies? Oh! what multitudes of your honoured ancestors are now before the throne, whose piety was, to a great extent, nourished and matured through the instrumentality of weekly fellowship one with another, in the class! And will you despise or neglect an ordinance which has so frequently been stamped with the Divine blessing, which is so admirably suited to man's mental constitution, and which is perfectly in accordance with the spirit of Christianity and the customs of the early Church? No, if you love Christ and his people,—if you are anxious to grow in grace,—if you are desirous of deeper experience in the things of God, you will gladly avail yourself of the privilege of sitting at the feet of some eminent and devoted follower of the Saviour, and of learning from him and others, how best to conquer the world and sin.

Perhaps you have already had your name enrolled among those "who speak often one to another," and if so, you know the blessedness of Christian communion, and you rejoice in the thought that "a book of remembrance is written," and that such shall be the Lord's in that day when He "makes up his jewels." But have you hitherto hesitated thus closely to join yourself to the people of God? Hesitate no longer. Your best, your highest interests, both for time and for eternity, hang upon your taking such a step. It cannot but be right. It cannot but be safe. It cannot but conduce to your present and your future good.

Far be it from us, however, to lead you to suppose that church-fellowship *in itself* will insure your salvation, or that it can ever be a *substitute* for personal religion. It is only as a means to your advancement in piety that we urge it on your attention. There is an inherent tendency in the human heart to trust in names and titles, in rites and ceremonies; a tendency specially manifested in many who are connected with the Church of Rome; but to which Protestants, Episcopalians, and even Methodists, are liable. Are there none among us who, simply because they are members of society think themselves better than other people, and, whilst resting short of a change of heart, are indulging a hope that they are in the way to heaven? Against such an error be ever on your guard. "The name of Christian, of reformed, of Protestant Christian," says an eminent living prelate, and we would add, "of Wesleyans, or of Baptists," "instead of saving will condemn, as doubly inexcusable, on the great day when the secrets of men's hearts shall be disclosed, him, who 'naming the name of Christ,' has not 'departed from iniquity.'" Hence we would carry you back to the subject of the previous section, and again remind you that nothing can be a substitute for personal religion, and hence we invite you to join the Church of Christ, not that having done so, you may rest satisfied with yourselves and think that all is well, but that you may be refreshed, strengthened, and invigorated by fellowship with God's people to pursue your upward and heavenward way.

SECTION III.

THE FORMATION OF CHARACTER.

" And sweet it is the growth to trace
Of worth, of intellect, of grace,
In bosoms where our labours first
Bid the young seed of spring-time burst;
And lead it on from hour to hour,
To ripen into perfect flower."—BOWRING.

PERSONAL religion obtained, and the privileges of Church membership secured, there are yet other duties devolving on our youth essential to their welfare, of which that of forming their character is one of the most important, as it embraces several others of the greatest moment.

To a young person character is everything,—the warp of his being and the arbiter of his fate. What is wealth? What is talent? What is even genius to him who is destitute of high-toned character? Wealth, talent, and genius can secure for their possessors no permanent respect or honour, and many who could boast of having them all, but whose characters have been seriously defective, have only won for themselves the scorn of society and the contempt of all good men. But character always secures respect. "I could stand hat in hand to that boy," said Dr. Arnold with regard to one of his pupils at Rugby who was distinguished for his dignified and upright conduct; and you will ever find

that, far more than parts or learning, those qualities which form what the best men call a noble character, will attract attention and secure esteem and love. Even piety is sullied if character be not attained. There are many youth who, though perhaps pious on the whole, are wanting in courage, in fortitude, in decision, or in perseverance; and the lack of these, or of some other properties, renders their profession somewhat dubious, detracts from their reputation, and prevents their usefulness.

"The worth of character," says the Rev. John Scott, in an admirable address to the students at Westminster, "often strikingly appears from the condition in which you see a person placed, who is *without it*. Situations open; posts of respectability and emolument are vacant, which his natural abilities and his attainments would enable him to fill; friends are anxious to promote his welfare,—to see him in a position where he will be useful and happy; but he wants character, and they dare not trust him. He is not manly; he is vain, frivolous, uncertain; he lacks thoughtfulness, industry. Or the negation is graver still. He has no character for sincerity, truth, integrity,—the fear is that he lacks them. He is wanting in some essential quality, perhaps in more than one; and there is a moral certainty that, if placed in a situation of trust and importance, he will miscarry. No one that knows him, therefore, will undertake the responsibility of recommending or appointing him. In a person of known and approved character there is no hesitation; every one is sure that what he *can*, he *will* do. The question, then, is solely one of competence. Do his powers and his acquirements render him capable of discharging the duties of the vacant situation? This ascertained, no one hesitates to place him in it."

The importance of the duty we would now urge upon you cannot, then, be over estimated. And let not our readers say that the formation of their character is not in their own hands. To affirm, as some do, that man is entirely the creature of circumstances, and that he has little or no control over his moral nature, is to place him on a level with the brute creation, and to charge God with the injustice of requiring at his hands what he is altogether unable to perform. Men, it is true, differ considerably in their mental and physical constitutions, and a certain stamp of character is impressed on every one from his infancy, or even from his birth. But the form is not so fixed that it cannot be altered and improved. It is like a model cast in yielding clay, not like a statue carved in ivory or stone. Hence it may be remoulded and reformed; and the educational and religious privileges we possess are the means to be employed in the momentous task. We are all builders, as Longfellow in one of his poems teaches,—the builders of our own character, the arbiters of our own fate; and we must do our work well, that the structure which we raise may be beautiful and clean;

“ Else our lives are incomplete,
Standing in these walls of time;
Broken stairways, where the feet
Stumble as they seek to climb.”

And it is in youth that the work must be commenced, for if left to riper years it will be all but impossible to accomplish it. You may turn the course of the stream just as it issues from the foot of the hill, but it will be another thing to turn it when it has swollen into a mighty tide. You may bend the tender sapling which has recently shot forth out of the parent

trunk, but it will not be so easy to bend it when it has become a vigorous branch. You may alter the form and character of the building whilst yet the foundations are being laid, but it will be a more arduous task to alter them when the superstructure has already been partly reared. In like manner, if you begin early, you may do much towards forming your character after the noblest models; but if you let the years of your youth pass away without attempting it, you will find the stuff with which you have to work hard and unyielding like the granite rock.

At once, then, and without delay, should you set about the task of cultivating your mind, forming habits of study and observation, rectifying the evils of your natural disposition, and getting deeply rooted in your breast those great principles of action by which alone you can rise to honour in the sight of man and in the sight of God. The formation of your character has, no doubt, begun. Education has done something for it; and your conversion to God, if it has really taken place, has done still more. Personal piety, indeed, is the foundation of character. Without this, whatever the superstructure may be, it will rest upon the shifting sand, and, when storms and tempests rise, will, sooner or later, tremble to its fall. But, though the foundation may have been laid, and laid well and firmly, the superstructure has yet to rise, and to gather materials for that, and then to put them fitly together, should now be your steady aim.

The mental and the moral,—the intellectual and the spiritual, are more closely allied than some appear to think; and hence, in speaking of the formation of character, both should be taken into account. It has been observed that “the germs of sin are marvellously fostered

by a certain want of intellectual development," and the converse of the proposition is equally true, that the germs of piety are marvellously fostered by the culture of the intellectual powers. The brightest characters are not found among the refined but irreligious, nor yet among the religious but uneducated;—they are found rather among those in whom religion and intelligence are combined; and hence, according to the means which he possesses,—the leisure at his disposal, the books within his reach, and the position in society he expects to fill, every young person should cultivate his mind; but especially should he attend to the culture of his moral and religious character, the full development of which is essential to his highest weal.

To constitute a truly noble character, certain qualities are indispensable, the attainment of which is not dependent on superior advantages of education, though, where these are possessed, they may, perhaps, be attained more readily. We have adverted to some of them in the preceding pages; we may here refer briefly to some others.

OPENNESS is essential to high-toned character. We mean by the term that noble quality which is opposed to cunning, slyness, deceitfulness, and meanness. Many people there are,—aye, and old ones, too,—whom you can never understand, and whom you can never be sure of. There is no transparency about them. They do everything in the dark. Instead of having a window in their breasts, as it has been said every one ought to have, their breasts are so closely shut up that their most familiar friends are unacquainted with their motives; and they go to work in such an underhand manner as to awaken suspicions in the minds of the least suspecting. Persons of this disposition never

gain the esteem of good men. Whether boys at school, youths at college, or apprentices in the shop, they are looked upon with contempt and with distrust, and every one keeps as much aloof from them as he can. On the other hand, truthfulness, candour, openness, are esteemed by all men, and in the young especially, they attract general attention, and win the highest praise. How beautiful a character is the prophet Daniel! Every one admires him, and for this, among other excellencies, that he was no deceiver, but that, when the decree of Darius was issued, he did not skulk into a corner to pray, but, "with his windows open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, kneeled upon his knees three times a-day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime." How easily might he have found some place of prayer where he could not have been seen or heard, or how easily might he have closed the windows of his chamber, and prayed in his heart whilst no one knew it! but there would have been a want of openness in that, and it would have seemed as if he intended to obey the king's command, which forbid every one to ask any petition of any god or man for thirty days. Daniel scorned such conduct. He resolved to perform his wonted duty, and he resolved, moreover, to do it openly, even at the risk of being cast into the lions' den. Let our youthful readers imbibe his spirit. Let them be open, candid, and truthful, in all their actions and in all their words; and let them never condescend to anything sly, cunning, or deceitful. Then, in whatever position of life they are placed, they will be understood by every one, for every one will perceive that there is in them nothing artful, nothing deceptive, nothing to conceal; and every one whose esteem is valuable will place confidence in them and in their word.

GENEROSITY is another trait of a noble character. It is admirable, as it displays itself in liberality to the poor, and to the cause of Christ; it is equally so, as it is exhibited in acts of kindness towards an opponent or an enemy. Some people are liberal, who are not generous. They can give of their substance to feed the poor, but they cannot forgive and forget an affront; they cannot shake hands with one who has offended them; they cannot act a magnanimous part towards those who have beaten them in contending for a prize. Yet is it not a nobler thing to be generous than to be resentful and unkind? Which do we admire most?—the conduct of Joseph towards his brethren, or that of his brethren towards him?—the conduct of David towards Saul, or that of Saul towards David? A somewhat similar contrast is seen in the following story, given by Niebuhr, in his “Lectures on Roman History:”—“In the year preceding the close of the first Punic war, the Roman Consul, C. Fundanius, marched out against Hamilcar; the troops of Hamilcar were defeated, through the fault of the commander of the infantry, and many were slain. Hamilcar sent for the Roman general, and asked for a truce, that he might be able to bury the dead. The consul sent him back the answer that he ought rather to be concerned about the living, and capitulate. Hamilcar either did not receive the bodies at all, or only with this insulting reply. A short time afterwards another engagement took place in which the Romans suffered great losses. Heralds were now sent by the Romans or their allies to effect the delivery of the dead, and Hamilcar granted their request by saying that he would always be willing to allow them to take back the dead after a battle, for he made war against the living only.” This was generosity; and we do not

hesitate to give the palm of honour to the Carthaginian general, and to condemn the conduct of the Roman.

For the display of generosity our early years furnish many opportunities. But how often are the young disposed to cherish the remembrance of a wrong, to refuse assistance to a rival, and even to trample on a fallen foe! Is conduct such as this worthy of Christian youth? No; many of the heathen would have been ashamed of it; much more, then, should it be shunned by followers of the Saviour of the world. Cultivate, then, a magnanimous spirit. The Christian can afford to be generous towards everyone, and when he is so he is like the clouds of heaven that drop fertilizing showers on the evil and the good; or like the bright orb of day that pours its beams upon the just and upon the unjust. Nay, rather, is he like his Father who is in heaven, whose are the clouds, and whose is the sun, and who is ever giving to the sons of men blessings more than they deserve.

"The truly generous is the truly wise,
And he, who loves not others, lives unblest."

SYMPATHY is in some respects allied to generosity. "The immense defect that want of sympathy is," says a modern writer, "may be strikingly seen in the failures of the many attempts that have been made in all ages to construct the Christian character omitting sympathy. It has produced numbers of people walking up and down one narrow plank of self-restraint, pondering over their own merits and demerits, keeping out, not the world exactly, but their fellow-creatures, from their hearts, and caring only to drive their neighbours before them on this plank of theirs, or to push them headlong. Thus, with many virtues, and much hard work at the formation of character, we have had splendid bigots, or censorious small people."

True as this is, there are perhaps few qualities more rare than deep and genuine sympathy for suffering man. The best of us are far too selfish. We think much of our own, but little of others' sufferings and sorrows. Yet we know not a tithe of the distress that surrounds us; and the young especially, favoured as many of them are with the comforts and amenities of life, are liable to indifference to it and unconcern. O let them cultivate a sympathising spirit! They will need sympathy themselves some day, as indeed we all shall; and hence they should manifest it towards others now. How beautiful is this virtue in the female character! and how beneficial is the influence which a Christian lady may exert when actuated by it! Think of Sarah Martin, or Florence Nightingale, or Miss Marsh; the latter, by her sympathy for the poor navvies, winning their confidence, drawing them from the ale-bench, and leading many of them to Christ. Try, youthful reader, to imbibe their spirit. Hate selfishness. Shun narrow-mindedness. Get a large, feeling, loving heart. Learn to "weep with those who weep," and let that charity which suffereth long *and is kind* breathe in all your actions and season all your words. Specially towards their aged and infirm parents should the young be kind and sympathising. Are they poor? their children should support them. Are they sick? they should watch over and nourish them. Are they passing through the valley of the shadow of death? they should, if possible, be near them, to hold out the lamp of truth and cheer the way. The widow's son of Nain was raised from the dead and given back to his mother, as some have thought, because he had been the staff of her declining days.

DECISION is a virtue for want of which numbers are ruined. Even of those who become sufficiently im-

pressed with the importance of religion to embrace it, there are many who, through lack of decision, make little progress in the Christian life, and who seldom succeed in anything they undertake. Fitful as the vane, and restless as the bark upon the mountain wave, they are tossed about with conflicting views and differences of opinion, to-day holding one set of notions and to-morrow another ; so that when temptation comes, and to temptation they are greatly exposed, they are not prepared to resist and to repel it. There are two monosyllables in our language, and to know when and how to use them is one of the great secrets of life. YES and NO are little words, but the manner in which a person utters them will often give you the key to his character. If to the solicitations of the world he says No! at once and in a firm and manly tone, it will be immediately perceived that he is not to be enticed ; but if he falters, if he draws out the word, if he says it as if he did not mean it, his seducers will set him down as an undecided character, and will return to the charge with every hope of success. If, when invited to take part in some noble enterprise, a person says "*Yes*" without hesitation, his friends are sure of him and fully reckon on his aid ; but if he says it coldly and indifferently, they doubt whether he means it, and do not, therefore, anticipate his co-operation. Learn, youthful reader, to say Yes! and No! when you ought to say them, and when you say them let every one know that you speak decidedly. In other words, be firm ; take your stand ; and let nothing move you from the right course. In these days, when speculations are so rife on all subjects, and when all kinds of theories on matters of faith and doctrine are discussed, it is essential to the highest interests of the young, that their minds become settled, and that they do not waver or give way to ques-

tionings and doubts. And temptations to *sin* should be repelled instantly, be the sacrifice what it may. "Madam," said a young man in a draper's shop to a lady who was about to purchase a silk dress, "it is my duty to inform you that that piece is soiled." The master overheard him, and dismissed him from his employ for having lost a customer. The young man knew his master's character; but he had decision enough, and honesty enough, and courage enough, to brave all consequences, and he left the establishment with a good conscience and a brave heart.

How noble was the conduct of the three Jewish captives in the land of Babylon! On the plains of Dura there stands a gigantic golden image, and thousands of people are assembled to witness its dedication. Presently the sound of music is heard, and in a moment the vast crowd bows down and worships the golden image. But yonder in the distance, or it may be in the very front, are these three youths, and there they stand, silent and unmoved. They are summoned into the presence of the king Nebuchadnezzar, and threatened with the consequences of their disregard of his mandate—the burning fiery furnace. What is their reply? "O King Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and He will deliver us from thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." There was courage; there was firmness; there was decision, worthy of immortal fame; and long as time shall last will the names of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego be had in honour.

Other qualities might be named as requisite to the

formation of a noble character, as manliness, fortitude, humility, and earnestness, together with others which may be deemed little things by some people, and yet have their influence upon society and the world,—as gentleness, politeness, blandness, and obligingness; but we may sum up all in the words of the Apostle Paul:—“Whatsoever things are true; whatsoever things are honest; whatsoever things are just; whatsoever things are pure; whatsoever things are lovely; whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.”

For the formation and preservation of character several things are requisite, among which, careful reading, the habit of prayer, and a spirit of watchfulness are indispensable.

Reading is essential, at least to the formation of the intellectual character, and almost equally so to the formation of the moral and the spiritual. This has been called a reading age; and, judging from the number of books and other publications which are daily issuing from the press, correctly so. Whereas in former days books were found only in the mansions of the rich, now the poorest child in the realm has access to them, for there is scarcely a village in the land which has not its Sabbath-school library; and the formation of Bible-classes and Christian associations has created and is fostering a taste for reading among young people of all classes. In this we rejoice, and we would recommend our youth to cultivate this taste; and instead of spending their leisure hours in unprofitable talk or injurious gossip, to employ a considerable portion of them in careful reading. We say *careful* reading; and we use the term both with regard to *what is read* and to *the mode of reading*.

The choice of books on all subjects is abundant; and no wonder, therefore, that the question is often asked by the young, What shall we read? Now, we would by no means restrict our young friends to one kind of reading, but would recommend them, as they have the means and the opportunity, to make themselves acquainted, more or less, with the best literature this country has produced,—with history, biography, philosophy, and poetry,—that the furniture of their minds may be rich and varied. “Studies,” says Lord Bacon, “serve for delight, for ornament, and for ability;” on which aphorism Archbishop Whately observes,—“We should, then, cultivate, not only the corn-fields of our minds, but the pleasure-grounds also. Every faculty and every study, however worthless they may be, when not employed in the service of God,—however debased and polluted when devoted to the service of sin,—become ennobled and sanctified when directed by one whose constraining motive is the love of Christ, towards a good object.” But we are afraid that the tendency in the present day is to cultivate the pleasure-grounds only, and to neglect the corn-fields. Many young people are fond of light literature,—of reading works of fiction, and, perhaps, poetry, who will scarcely look at a thoroughly good book, to read which requires a little thought and care. What is the result? Their minds are but half cultivated, and scarcely that; the corn-fields, which should produce something good and substantial, are left in fallow, and only the pleasure-grounds are cared for, which produce nothing but flowers, which are beautiful for a time, but of transient duration, and, comparatively, of little worth. Take heed, then, *what* you read. You cannot read everything. You must proceed on the principle of selection. Read nothing of an injurious

tendency; for a bad book operates like poison in the system, which, when once in, can never be thoroughly got rid of. Read chiefly substantial books,—books with something in them,—books which will lead you to think,—books which will inform the memory, discipline the mind, correct the judgment, and warm the heart.

The mode of reading is equally important. "Read," says Lord Bacon again, "not to contradict and confute, nor to believe and take for granted, nor to find talk and discourse; but to weigh and consider. Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested; that is, some books are to be read only in part; others to be read, but not curiously; and some few to be read wholly, and with diligence and attention."* These are weighty words, and should be well pondered; for we fear that desultory reading, rather than careful and attentive reading, is the practice of many. They taste almost everything; they chew and digest nothing. Hence there is a great deal of superficiality in the present day, even among those who profess to be educated people; for it is not skipping from book to book, and from one subject to another, that tends to build up the mental character, but the thoughtful study of a few standard works. If our young people would set themselves to a thorough mastery of two or three good books, such as "Butler's Analogy," "Paley's Evidences," "Watson's Institutes," "Chalmers' Natural Theology," and "McCosh on the Method of the Divine Government," they would find their minds better furnished than if they read cart-loads of books with indifferent haste. It is not the amount of what you read

* "Essays," with Annotations by Arch. Whately. Fourth Edition, p. 474, &c. An invaluable book, especially to young men.

that will tell upon the formation of your character, so much as the understanding and digesting what you read. A man may have a voracious appetite for food, and may eat everything set before him; but if he cannot digest it, it will not increase his strength and vigour. And in like manner a person may read everything that comes in his way; but if he does not meditate on what he reads and endeavour to understand it, his mind will receive no benefit, but will remain as narrow and as contracted as ever.

In the reading of the Scriptures especially, haste is most injurious, and the want of thought and of reflection decidedly pernicious. To read so many chapters a-day is not a duty, neither will it be attended with profit, unless they are read carefully. Our duty is to read a portion of God's Word daily, and "to weigh and to consider." Be Bible-readers, whatever else you are; but be not superficial Bible-readers. Meditate on these things. Dive deep into the well. Search the sacred pages as for hid treasure. Especially study the biographies of the Bible. "Scripture," says an eminent commentator, "has an incomparable felicity in describing the inner characters of minds." It paints men to the life, so that you see both their excellencies and their failings,—both their virtues and their defects. It cannot fail, therefore, if carefully studied, to exert a powerful and beneficial influence on the formation of character; for it teaches us, by the living examples which it sets before us, both what to imitate and what to shun; whilst in the Great Biography,—the Biography of Jesus, the Prophet of Nazareth of Galilee, it presents before us a perfect pattern, the imitation of which should be the great aim of life.

The *habit of prayer* has a powerful influence on the

formation of character. Its utility, who can doubt? Its efficacy, who can deny? It brings the soul into immediate contact with the Deity, lifts it above the transitory pleasures and the fleeting joys of earth, and thus ennobles it, dignifies it, and makes it truly great. Sooner give up reading than prayer if you wish to form your character aright, for men prayed and became good and holy, before books were written, and when reading was but little known. There were many noble characters in the early ages of Christianity, ere printing was invented, ere books were numerous, and ere the art of reading was possessed, except by few. By what means were these characters formed? Doubtless, in part by oral instruction; but chiefly by prayer, accompanied by meditation on the things of God. Prayer, apart from its efficacy in obtaining for us the direct blessings for which we ask, has a reflex influence on the mind, so that the youth or the man, who is in the daily habit of it, gains dispositions, thoughts, and feelings, to which otherwise he would be a total stranger. There is not one of the qualities we have mentioned as essential to nobility of character which can either be obtained or cultivated without prayer. Is it openness? Genuine prayer is the very antipodes of deceitfulness and cunning, for it lays bare the breast for the inspection of Heaven, and its language is, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Is it generosity? Whose is the most magnanimous mind but his who has constant fellowship with the benevolent and merciful Creator? Is it sympathy? No one knows how to sympathize but he whose heart is melted by the influence of prayer; and it has been ever found that the truest friends of man were those that, like Abraham (who

pleaded so earnestly for the cities of the plain), were the friends of God? Is it decision? What can give firmness to the hesitating, confidence to the doubting, and boldness to the fearful, enabling them to say No, at once, to the most specious temptations by which they are assailed, and nerving their arm to do battle with the world, as the spirit of devotion,—as communion with the Source of life and power? On the formation of character, then, prayer has a potent influence. It often clears the mental eye, rectifies the temper, and calms the passions of the soul; and the man who makes it the habit of his life obtains daily victories over his own nature, and becomes more and more assimilated to the image of the blessed God.

Connect, then, with all your reading, all your studies, all your daily avocations and engagements, the practice of prayer.

“ More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of. * * *
For what are men better than sheep or goats
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
Both for themselves and those who call them friends !”

The day you pass without prayer, dear reader, is a day lost in respect to the great work of building up your character for the future. Neither your mental nor your moral character will be formed aright—formed for the work before you in this life, or for the employments and rewards of the life to come,—unless you cultivate the spirit of devotion, and draw near frequently to the throne of grace.

Essential to the preservation of character is a *spirit of watchfulness*. “Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.” However well a garden

may be stocked with flowers and fruit-trees, yet if it is not fenced and guarded it will soon be worthless, for ruthless hands will spoil its productions, and barbarous feet tread them in the ground. The heart is a garden—the garden of character, for “as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.” What, then, if it is not protected,—if no watch is kept over it,—if the entrances to it are left open to any intruder? O, then, how soon will the loveliest flowers and the choicest fruits which have been planted in it be rooted up! How soon will the noblest traits of character be trodden in the mire and lost! Are there no sad instances around you of persons once in possession of honour, integrity, virtue, and religion, who, through unwatchfulness, have forfeited them all? There was a young man some years ago whose character stood high wherever he was known; who was admired, and that justly, for his eminent piety, and who was often referred to as a pattern of Christian devotedness and zeal; but one day temptation came and found him off his guard, and in a little while that noble character was shattered, and lay, like the fragment of a once lofty column, on the ground,—the grief of friends and the derision of the world. And if character be once lost, how can it be recovered? That beautiful piece of art, the Portland vase, one of the ornaments of the British Museum, was once broken by a maniac who had got into the room in which it stood; but the pieces were gathered up and so skilfully put together, that only by a minute inspection would any one be able to tell where it had been joined. But let a man’s character be broken, and where is the artist who can gather up the fragments, and unite them together, and reconstruct the shattered vase? It may be restored by his own efforts, but it will probably take him years to regain the position in society he had

before; and even then the remembrance of the past will cling to him, and will cause him many a bitter pang.

Have you secured a good reputation? Has your character been already formed after a noble pattern? Or, are you now at work in forming it, having before you the best examples you can find? O, then, be watchful! Guard well the avenues of your mind and heart. Cultivate a spirit of vigilance and fear. Not far from you lies the serpent coiled up in the brake, and ready in a moment to dart forth and inflict a mortal sting. Not far from you couches the lion who is watching for his prey, and is waiting to destroy and to devour. You are in the midst of an insidious world. You are surrounded with a host of enemies. You are exposed to innumerable dangers and perils. Watch, therefore; watch like the sentinel on duty who dares not slumber at his post. Watch both by night and day,—in storms and in sunshine, WATCH!



PART THE FOURTH.

The Prospects of the Youth of Methodism.

"NOTHING COULD BE MORE ERRONEOUS THAN FOR THOSE WHO FEAR GOD TO SUPPOSE THEMSELVES AS LIABLE AS EVER TO 'THE CHANGES AND CHANCES OF THIS MORTAL LIFE.' CHANGE, IF GOD SEE GOOD, THEY MAY EXPERIENCE; BUT THE SINCERELY RELIGIOUS HAVE DONE WITH CHANCE. HAVING ONCE CORDIALLY COMMITTED THEMSELVES TO GOD'S PATERNAL CARE, THEY CAN MEET NOTHING IN THEIR COURSE WHICH IS NOT THE RESULT OF DIVINE ADJUSTMENT,—OF WISDOM, WHICH CANNOT ERR,—OF LOVE, TO WHICH THE TENDERNESS OF THE TENDEREST PARENTS BEARS NO COMPARISON. THIS IS NO DOUBTFUL SPECULATION: IT IS INCLUDED IN THAT ONE WORD, GOD."—*Alexander Knox.*

SECTION I.

PROSPECTS IN RELATION TO SOCIETY AT LARGE.

“ Train up thy children, England ! in the way
Of righteousness, and feed them with the bread
Of wholesome doctrine. Where hast thou thy mines
But in their industry ?
Thy bulwarks where but in their breast !
Thy might but in their arms ? ”—SOUTHEY.

“ ‘ WHEN I am a man,’ is the poetry of childhood ;
‘ when I was a child,’ is the poetry of old age.” So
said the bard of Sheffield, James Montgomery, one of
those poets which the youth of our country will always
love, and some of whose flowing words will be ever
on their lips. “ When I am a man ! ”—what boy has not
often uttered these words with the most joyous feelings,
and looked forward to the time when he would be a boy
no longer, with a kind of hopeful pride, fancying that
manhood would be sure to bring with it a considerable
increase of happiness and pleasure ? Hence it is that
children and young people are always glad on the
arrival of their birthdays, and always a little proud to
tell their age ; whereas those who have passed the meridian
of life look upon their birthdays in a very different light,
and, instead of wishing to make themselves older than
they are, would be glad if it could be proved that they
were a few years younger.

Well, ere long, our youthful readers will have passed the period of youth, and will have entered upon another stage of life. Have they just got into their teens? How soon will they be men and women, actively engaged in the pursuits of business, or surrounded with domestic cares! Ten short years will see them grown up to that honourable estate, and then the prospects which they now anticipate with so much pleasure will either be realized or otherwise. That they will be realized in all their fancied loveliness is scarcely probable; for it is with life as with a landscape;—viewed at a distance, it looks most enchanting, but a nearer view dispels the illusion, and, instead of gardens, and flower beds, and gravelled walks, presents to us rugged rocks, and dreary valleys, and precipitous hills, to journey over which proves no easy task.

To present a gloomy picture of life is, however, by no means, our wish. We rejoice to know that the prospects of many of our youth are bright and pleasant, and we would on no account damp the ardour of their minds by telling them that all these prospects will prove illusive, and that their best and happiest days are necessarily those which are now passing over them. Every period of life has its cares and sorrows, and every period of life has its blessings and its joys; hence, if they are under the influence of religious principles, our young people may look forward to the future with pleasurable hopes, and, happy as they now are, may expect to be still happier as months and years advance. Let them, however, guard against aerial castle-building. Let them not say to themselves, "We will rise to eminence, we will gain riches; we will win the applause of men;" for, however ardently they may toil, and however skilfully they may lay their plans, their success in life will depend on the Divine blessing, and many a one who has aspired after greatness,

rather than after goodness, has no sooner attained the eminence than giddiness has seized his brain, and he has fallen into the very depths of ruin. Solemnly instructive to young men is the history of Robert Clive. At the age of eighteen he went out to Madras as a clerk in the East India Company's service; but, his employment being distasteful to him, he attempted to shoot himself. The pistol missed fire, and he concluded that he was destined for something great. He entered the army; he rose, step by step, to the highest honours; he became commander of the forces; he won the memorable battle of Plassey; he was made an Irish peer; he defended himself successfully in Parliament against the charges which were alleged against him; the House of Commons refused to condemn him, and came to the resolution that he had "rendered great and meritorious services to his country;" and yet his proud spirit was so mortified by the conduct of his opponents that he first took to opium-eating, and at length died by his own hand!

But what *are* the prospects of our youth? let us ask, especially with regard to society at large? Our youth will be the men and women of the next generation—the coming actors on the great stage of life. Twenty years hence, and some of them will be the merchants, or the manufacturers, or the working-men of England; some of them, perhaps, the magistrates or the legislators of the nation; many of them the heads of rising families,—the fathers and the mothers of merry children; whilst the present actors on the stage will have either passed into the shade of declining life, or will have sunk into the silent grave. Well, therefore, may England be anxious respecting her youth, and well may she wish to found schools and colleges in which they may be trained in virtue and religion; for in what do her greatness and her

stability consist? Not in her arms, not in her wealth, not in her commerce, but in the moral character of her population. If, then, her youth, or a considerable portion of her youth, should grow up to manhood in vice and godlessness, where will be her boasted dignity a few years hence? Had she been more fully alive to the importance of educating her youth, half a century ago, or less, she would not, perhaps, have had to mourn, as, alas! she now has, over the juvenile delinquencies of her large towns and cities; and, even now, she is but half awake to this momentous duty, so that her jails and her prisons are still occupied with numbers of youthful criminals, the greater part of whom, it is generally found, can read and write, either very imperfectly, or not at all.*

Great Britain is, no doubt, in many respects, an illustrious country; yet the moral condition of vast masses of its population, especially in such cities as London, Manchester, Liverpool, and Glasgow, is appalling, and cannot be contemplated by the Christian patriot without deep sorrow and anxiety. One of the most distressing sights to the philanthropic mind which these, and other towns and cities, present, is the large number of children and young people who are wandering about the streets to a late hour in the night, apparently uncared for by others, and utterly thoughtless and reckless themselves; some of them half-intoxicated; many of them smoking cigars or pipes; numbers of them, of both sexes, uttering oaths, and taking the name of God in vain! No doubt the greater portion of

* During the nine months ending September 30, 1856, 4,470 persons were taken into custody in the City of Manchester. Of these, but 103 could read and write well; and 1,748 could not read or write at all. And further, of these 4,470, 963 were persons under twenty years of age.

them have been brought up in ignorance; but there are many among them—many of the young men especially—who have been taught better, and have been favoured with a liberal, and even a religious, education. Oh, shame upon them that they should have no more respect for themselves, their parents, and their country, but should thus dishonour all! They are a curse to society, and not a blessing, for they are doing everything in their power to bring down upon the land the obloquy of other nations and the displeasure of Almighty God.

Britain's future depends upon her youth. "The child is father of the man," says one, and, if so, what the youth of a country are, that the country itself will be when they are men. If the majority of them are ignorant, godless, and immoral, woe to the land a few years hence! If, on the other hand, they are taught the principles of morality and religion, and practise what they learn, our highly-favoured country will have naught to fear, even though other nations should be hostile to her and should threaten to invade her peaceful shores.

It is to be feared that, numerically, a very large portion of the youth of Britain are under the influence of erroneous principles; but they are not, we would hope, the portion which, as time advances, will hold the reins of Government, occupy seats of honour, and give the tone of morals to general society. A minority on the side of right has often greater power than a majority on the side of wrong; so that if the educated and Christian youth of the land are but faithful to their trust they may be the means of rolling back the tide of ungodliness which, like a mighty flood, would overwhelm the State. Will the YOUTH OF METHODISM be true and faithful? We believe that the majority of them will.

It is a well-known and admitted fact that the Metho-

dists, as a people, have ever been loyal subjects, true patriots, genuine philanthropists, and good citizens. Since the days of Mr. Wesley, society, in this country, has been greatly improved in many respects; and that improvement is owing, very considerably, to the influence of his labours and those of his coadjutors on the masses of the population. It would be a shame, then, and a disgrace to the youth of our community, trained as they have been in such a school, were they, as they reach maturer years, to throw their influence into the scale of sin and error, and thus to vitiate society rather than improve it. Twenty years ago an eminent minister of our body who lately occupied the Presidential chair of the Conference,* when addressing children of religious parents, uttered the following words :—

“The world reasonably looks for much at your hand. They expect that a laborious breaking up of the fallow ground, an unsparing seed-time, and patient waiting for the former and the latter rain, should issue in an abundant harvest. They look to you for the results of our superior principles of education, and for a justification of our boasted confidence of Divine influence to succeed the use of appointed means. The world has a right to look to you for a superior morality. The standard your parents have adopted, and the motives they have inculcated are, professedly and really, superior to all others. The world has therefore a right to expect in you the utmost regard to truth, to goodness, to integrity, to sobriety, to temperance, to godliness. They cannot expect to witness in you the same greediness after wealth, the same panting for honour, the same delight in sensual enjoyments, the same trifling, the same disregard of things sacred and

* The Rev. F. A. West.

Divine, which they see in others who have not had your advantages."

The young people to whom these words were spoken, are now, if still alive, men and women, and some of them perhaps have not forgotten the appeals addressed to them. We adopt these sentiments, and we tell the Methodist youth of this generation that the world expects much of *them*, that *to them* all England looks for an example of the highest morals, the purest virtue, and the most exalted piety and goodness.

That your country may not be disappointed, and that your own fair prospect in life may not be blasted through your folly or imprudence, there are several things of essential moment which we would have you ever bear in mind.

It is essential that you let providence choose your station and inheritance. Our great dramatist says, "There's a divinity which shapes our ends, rough-hew them as we will;" but the sentiment savours too much of fatalism, and we believe that there are numberless instances in which young people especially lose their providential path, and thereby plunge themselves into irremediable distress and sorrow. There is a divinity which shapes our ends, but we must follow its leadings, submit to its discipline, and be obedient to its calls; otherwise we shall shape our own ends, and wretched they will doubtless prove. Much of the misery of human life arises from the unwillingness of men to take the path which providence points out to them as the one they ought to follow. They see, or fancy that they see, another path far more pleasant and agreeable than that, and though many things indicate that it is not the path for them, yet take it they will and do; and when, perhaps, it is too late to retrace their steps, they find themselves

like travellers lost in the mazes of a forest, and the further they proceed the more hopeless their case becomes.

"Wilt thou not," then, "from this time, cry unto" God, "My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?" We assume that you have already obtained that personal religion of which we spoke in a preceding section; and now, as one of several practical proofs of your sincerity, we ask you to commit your way unto the Lord, to permit Him to choose for you your lot in life, to seek His guidance in every step you take, and to follow that guidance *wherever it may lead*. Our heavenly Father has a right to do with us as He chooses, and to place us where He will; and we may be assured that just in that niche of the great temple of society in which He would have us be we shall be the most useful to others, and shall realize the greatest happiness to ourselves. It is with men as it is with plants, they flourish best in the climate and the soil for which they were designed by the ruler of the world.

Nor will you need Divine direction if you seek it, and are willing to follow it. But it *must be sought*—sought in earnest and persevering prayer; and when sought *it must be followed*—followed implicitly and without any hesitation. To ask God to guide them, as some men do, and yet to take their own way after all, is but a mockery of the Most High; and even to hesitate, when we know what duty is, is both dishonourable to Him and injurious to ourselves. How many have closed the door of usefulness against themselves for ever by standing with it on the jar and doubting whether to enter it or not.

"There is a tide in the affairs of men,
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
Neglected, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows, and in miseries."

Perhaps the tide is at the flood with some of our young friends just now. O take it, we beseech you! Boldly and fearlessly launch your skiff upon the waters, and, with Jesus as your pilot, proceed upon life's voyage; and, rough as it may sometimes prove, it will at least be safe, and your prospects will brighten as you near the port.

It is essential that you be satisfied with your providential lot. The prospects of very many of the youth of Methodism, with regard to this world, are not like those of the rich and great, for they are the children of the middle and of the working-classes of society whose lot it is to earn their bread by the sweat of their brow. But let them not repine, or murmur, or yield to a spirit of dissatisfaction and complaint; for their position is as honourable a one, as is that of the titled nobility of the land, and they may be as happy in their cottage homes, in their shops, or in their fields, as the nobleman in his ancestral hall, or as the monarch on the throne.

By no means, however, would we check the aspirations of the young to rise above their station if they can, provided only that they are actuated by right motives, and that they adopt only right plans. "Power to do good is the true and lawful aid of aspiring," says Lord Bacon, and to aim at a higher position in society with this end in view is perfectly right, and is often crowned with success. Providence favours the diligent and persevering; and many a one, like James Ferguson the Peasant-boy Philosopher; or George Stephenson, the Railway Engineer; or Hugh Miller, the Geologist; has risen by his industry and talent from among the labouring classes to a position worthy of any peer of the realm. It is always better, however, to rise by degrees than *per saltum*—by a bound; for, as we often see when poor men

come suddenly into the possession of large fortunes, the change is too great, and the mind is unable to retain its balance. Rise, if you can, by fair and honest means, but be not in haste to gain either riches or honour; and if you cannot gain them without artifice and trickery be willing to follow the plough or to work at the loom, until you are enfeebled by age, or called to your eternal rest.

It may be thought hard by many that they are doomed to labour, especially in some of the employments of life—in the mine, for instance, at the forge, or with the needle, and that, too, with no hope of bettering their condition to the end of life. "Talk of our prospects," some perhaps will say; "we have none but gloomy ones, for we see nothing before us but work, work, work; and that almost beyond our strength." Yes, such is the lot of many, and we mourn over the fact. But this is a working world, and labour is the fruit of sin. It is a mistake to suppose that toil is the lot of what are called the labouring classes only. It is experienced in all the walks of life, so that we often read of the struggles of the lawyer, the struggles of the artist, the struggles of the pastor, to obtain the position he desires, and to keep it when obtained. Complain, then, we must not, even though it seems as if our lot were worse than that of any one around us. Rather must we be submissive, patient, and contented, remembering that religion is designed to sweeten every cup, and that, if in this world we have toil, in the next we may have rest and peace.

It is essential that you be prepared for either prosperity or adversity. The probability is that you will have a measure of both. For the path of life does not lie over a smooth and level country, but over a somewhat rugged one, so that now the traveller is on the lofty

eminence, breathing the mountain air and animated by the sun's bright rays ; and, anon, he is in the lonely vale where the deep, broad shadows wrap him round, and everything seems gloomy, sad, and desolate. You are just entering on this perilous journey, and it will be well if you are prepared either for prosperity or adversity—either for the mountain top or the lowly vale—either for the summer's sun or for the winter's chilling blast.

For, should prosperity shine upon your path for awhile—that is, should you gain riches, or honour, or distinction of any kind, the danger is that you will become proud, ostentatious, covetous, and overbearing. Where is the youth who, without a large measure of Divine grace, could bear to be exalted in the social scale, who would not be elated with success, and whom worldly prosperity would not render cold and distant to his poorer friends? “Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked.” Saul, once “little in his eyes,” was made king over Israel, and then rebelled against God. And there have been instances innumerable in which young people, and others, have no sooner attained the summit of the mount than they have lost their gentleness, humility, and tenderness of conscience, and have become worldly-minded, uncharitable, and neglectful of almost every duty. Beware, then, of prosperity. Guard against its peculiar temptations. Be prepared to meet, and to contend against, its evils. It looks desirable at a distance, and few there are who are fully aware of the dangers connected with it ; but it has its dangers, and to be apprised of them, and to endeavour to avoid them, is indicative of a prudent and discerning mind.

But adversity may be your lot. In one form or other it is almost sure to come, and it would be a great calamity to you if it did not. “There is no more perilous ordeal

through which man can pass," says one; "no greater curse which can be imposed on him, as he is at present constituted, than that of being compelled to walk his life long in the sunlight of unshaded prosperity." Adversity is essential to true greatness. It is not in the camp that the soldier learns to be brave and courageous, but in the battle-field, facing the foe. It is not in his comfortable home on land that the sailor becomes bold and fearless, but on the boisterous main, contending with the storm. A man's true character is never known until the winter of adversity sets in around him; but then, if he possesses real magnimity, he will stand out, like the patriarch of Uz, and appear greater and wiser than he ever did before.

Yet adversity is hard to bear, and especially if severe and long-continued. It has crushed many a noble spirit, and the only sure armour in which to meet it is "the armour of righteousness on the right-hand and on the left." Put on this, youthful warrior, and then, though storms and tempests rise, though your path be rugged and your prospects dark, though enemies assail you, and you meet with many rebuffs from the world, you shall nobly stand your ground, until, at length, you come up out of the battle-field, laden with the spoils of the prostrate foe. Some anticipate adversity, but this is needless; some shrink from it, but this is cowardly; some are stoical to it, but this is vain; some sink under it, but this is unmanly and unchristian. Let our readers meet it (not beforehand, but when it comes) with fortitude, bear it with patience, and conquer it by faith and prayer.

It is essential that you guard against the prevalent vices of the age. Nothing will blast the prospects of our youth more swiftly and more certainly than these. What-

ever their position in society may now be, or whatever they may hope it will hereafter be, all their bright anticipations will vanish in the air, if, yielding to the temptations by which they will probably be assailed, they once set foot within the haunts of vice. Against the demon of intemperance, especially, we must lift up the voice of solemn warning.* It is slaying its thousands in the land every year, and among them are numbers of children and young people, some of whom were once scholars in our Sunday-schools, ay, and even members of the Church of Christ. Out of seventy-eight prisoners tried at the Glasgow assizes, in the year 1848, sixty-two had been connected with Sunday-schools, and of these fifty-nine admitted that drinking was the cause of their becoming criminals. "Out of fifteen young men professing piety, and teachers in the Sabbath-school," says a minister at Ipswich, "nine were ruined through drink." And the Rev. James Sherman states that of a select class in his Sunday-school, consisting of forty-six persons, "thirteen became confirmed drunkards, and nine occasional drunkards." Well might Dr. Guthrie say, "Before God and man, before the Church and the world, I impeach intemperance. I charge it with the murder of innumerable souls. In this country, blessed with freedom and plenty, the Word of God and the liberties of true religion, I charge it as the cause,—whatever else be their source elsewhere,—of almost all the poverty, and almost all the crime, and almost all the misery, and almost all the ignorance, and almost all the irreligion, that disgrace

* After several years' experience the author can bear his testimony in favour of total abstinence. Since he adopted the principle he has been decidedly benefited both in mind and body; and he should rejoice if every young person connected with our Churches would sign the pledge.

and afflict the land." * His words are not a whit too strong ; nay, we believe that no words are strong enough to paint the misery and the woe which are entailed on families and on individuals, in Great Britain alone, through this one vice.

Bright, on the whole, are the prospects of thousands of our youth ; but for many of them we tremble, lest, like some that we have known, they should be induced to put to their lips the intoxicating cup, to join the companionship of the gay and thoughtless, to dishonour God's Sabbaths, and to blaspheme his holy name : and, oh ! the thought of one of the children of our day and Sabbath-schools learning to sing the drunkard's song, becoming a disgrace to the Church that nourished him, and a curse instead of a blessing to the world, is one on which no Christian parent, teacher, or patriot can dwell without emotions of overwhelming grief. For what are the certain results of intemperance ? They are these,—*the ruin of character ; the ruin of health ; the ruin of circumstances ; the ruin of peace of mind ; the ruin of domestic happiness ; the ruin of the deathless soul.*

But we pause, with the hope that this warning word will be heard and regarded by all our youth. In relation to society at large, there are before many of you doors of honourable employment opening, and spheres of noble toil ; but it depends upon yourselves whether you prove worthy of them, and whether, having entered them, you fill the post assigned to you successfully and well.

" Great duties are before you, and great songs ;
And, whether crowned or crownless, when you fall
It matters not, so that God's work be done."

* " The City ; its Sins and its Sorrows," p. 74. See also the Appendix, p. 132, &c.

Do, then, that work,—the work to which God calls you, and do it with your might; for then, though you win no worldly honours, you will gain a fadeless and imperishable crown; though your names be not enrolled in the annals of human fame, Christ will confess your names before His Father and before His holy angels.

SECTION II.

PROSPECTS IN RELATION TO THE CHURCH OF CHRIST.

“ Rouse to some work of high and holy love,
And thou an angel's happiness shalt know,—
Shalt bless the earth ; while in the world above
The good begun by thee shall onward flow
In many a branching stream, and wider grow.
The seed that, in these few and fleeting hours,
Thy hands unsparing and unwearied sow,
Shall deck thy grave with amaranthine flowers,
And yield thee fruits divine in heaven's immortal bowers.”
—WILCOX.

THE traveller who is exploring a newly discovered country will climb some lofty eminence that he may gaze upon a wider prospect; and, having surveyed it from that particular point, will then look out for, and climb another elevation, that he may get a different and still more extensive view. Now, we have been looking at the prospects of our youth from one elevated spot; let us climb a second, and contemplate them from that also, for there is a point from which they may be viewed considerably loftier than the one on which we have already stood, and from which they assume another and a far more cheering character. Come with us, young people, and we will describe to you the scene on which our eye now rests.

Yonder, in the distance, you may discern a mountain, on the summit of which stands a beautiful and imposing edifice. What is that edifice? It is not a hall of science,—nor a mart of commerce,—nor a theatre of art,—it is the Temple of the living God,—the Church of Jesus Christ, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, He Himself being the chief corner-stone. And see, there are multitudes flocking towards it,—climbing the mountain, thronging the steps, pressing in at the gates; whilst many are actively employed in and about the building in numerous acts of worship and of love. Among them are numbers of children and young people; and ever and anon these children and young people, as they grow older and wiser, are admitted into the inner apartments of the edifice, and are employed in yet higher and nobler services. *Who are they?* do you ask? They are such as yourselves, dear readers; and these are the prospects we would have you contemplate,—your prospects in relation to the Christian Church, into which you have already been received by baptism, and to which, we trust, you belong, by your own voluntary choice. What a bright future is before you here! Of the Church you may say, as did the Psalmist, “A day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness;” for the prospect of occupying the meanest place in the tabernacle of the Lord of Hosts is more cheering to contemplate than that of being elevated to the highest seats of dignity which commerce, or literature, or science can bestow.

The Church of Christ, and especially the Wesleyan branch of it, finds employment for every one. No sooner does a young person become truly pious, than it places him in a sphere of active usefulness. Within its

precincts talents of the meanest, and talents of the highest order, will find room for their exercise and development; nor will a meed of honourable praise be denied to any one who labours diligently to fulfil his task. Our youth, then, may be sure that the Church will not discard them. She has nursed them and cherished them in their childhood like a gentle mother, and she loves them too much to cast them off when they arrive at maturer years. Indeed, she cannot do without them, neither can they do without her. They need her succours still, and she now needs their zealous labours in her cause.

For, *her members die*. Where are now the early founders of the Church of Christ,—Paul, Peter, John? Where are her noble martyrs and confessors,—Polycarp, Ignatius, Cyprian, and Jerome? Where are her illustrious teachers and Reformers,—Augustine, Huss, Luther, and Melancthon? and where are our own immediate predecessors,—the Wesleys, and their coadjutors,—the Thompsons, the Mathers, the Pawsons, the Clarkes, —with others, too numerous to name,—the honoured instruments of spreading vital Christianity through the land, and of arousing the slumbering churches of the nation to activity and zeal? *Where are they?* Their dust reposes in the tomb; their spirits have entered into rest. And many of the fathers and the mothers of the present youth of Methodism have already followed them, whilst others are retiring from the field,—are standing on the margin of the flood,—and are saying to us, “Our work is done.” Sabbath-school teachers, who have laboured in the work zealously and long, are reluctantly withdrawing from the ranks; devoted class-leaders, local preachers, trustees, and stewards, are passing away to their rewards; ministers are letting fall from their hands

the standard of the cross, because too feeble to grasp it any longer; and missionaries are dying in the high places of the foreign field, amidst the tears and lamentations of their spiritual children.

To the rising generation, therefore, the Church is looking with the deepest interest and with much anxiety. To whom, indeed, can she look, if not to them, for labourers to fill up the vacancies in her army,—for agents to carry on her evangelistic work,—for warriors to espouse her cause, and do battle with a hostile world? Up, then, young people, and enter the doors of usefulness which are opening before you. To work for God, to be employed in the service of the Church, to take even an humble part in the glorious enterprise of spreading the knowledge of a Saviour's name, is far more honourable than to spend life, as many do, in amassing wealth, in seeking honour, or in pursuing fame, and is, indeed, the grand end for which life is given.

We doubt not that many of our youth are ready to respond to the summons of their Lord, are ardently panting for the field of action, and are longing to take part in the conflict which is waging in the world. Like the noble war-horse, who, hearing the sound of the trumpet in the distance, paws the ground, is impatient of delay, and will scarcely yield to his rider's check, they want to go forth, and mingle in the battle, that they may make sure of a part in the final victory. It is well; for without a measure of enthusiasm they will not succeed, and, in the youthful soldier of Jesus Christ, burning zeal is an essential qualification.

Before some of the youth of Methodism, there are spheres of usefulness in the Church, *which will not necessarily interfere with their secular calling in life*; before others, there are spheres of usefulness in prospect

which will require them to abandon all secular pursuits and to devote themselves wholly to the service of their Head and Lord. Both these spheres should be carefully considered.

The Church has work to do for those who are not wholly detached from secular pursuits; and very honourable work it is. That of supporting by their worldly substance the several agencies which the Church employs, may be mentioned first. Methodism is a voluntary system. Its ministry, its schools, its home and foreign Missions, and its numerous sanctuaries, have been raised and sustained by the freewill offerings of its people. And what a noble monument of their large-hearted liberality it is! In little more than a century there have been built in England and Wales upwards of 6,500 places of worship (many of them beautiful and spacious structures), in which accommodation is provided for more than 1,400,000 persons;—in almost every town, village, and hamlet of the land Sabbath-schools have been established, some of them taught in places of worship, but the greater number in separate buildings erected for the purpose;—in a considerable number of places flourishing day-schools have also been founded, libraries purchased, tract societies organized, and societies formed for the relief of the sick, the aged, and the poor. A ministry, too, has been raised up and sustained, which, in Great Britain and Ireland, now numbers, inclusive of supernumerary ministers, and ministers on trial, 1,340 persons. For the training of young men for the ministry, two noble and efficient Institutions have been founded, and, in addition to these, an equally efficient one—the Normal Institution at Westminster,—for the training of day-school teachers, of both sexes, for future employment at home or abroad. And, not to dwell here on the Home Missions

of Methodism, since Methodism has been a Home Mission from its infancy, there is its wondrous Foreign Missionary Society, the operations of which are now carried on in every quarter of the globe and in many of the islands of the sea; whose annual income is upwards of 120,000*l.*, and the number of whose agents, paid and unpaid, is 13,381.

What a vast machinery, then, has Methodism put in operation? If the annual cost of it could be ascertained, it would, we doubt not, surprise the world; and if it were known how, and from what sources, the money is raised, the world would be surprised the more. From ten thousand little rills it comes streaming down to the different reservoirs, not once a year, but the whole year round; the poor, as well as the rich, contributing to the supply, whilst, here and there, it flows in wider streams, the rich as well as the poor taking pleasure, as indeed they ought, in sustaining the Redeemer's cause. Now, shall this machinery be kept in operation? and shall the requisite supplies continue to be furnished? To a very great extent the answer to these questions rests with the rising youth of our community. Ere long the whole of the machinery will be committed to their trust, and on them will devolve the task of keeping it at work. "Other men" have "laboured," and they are "entering into their labours." Their fathers have built the noble vessel, and have kept it, with the Divine blessing, afloat upon the waters, with all its sails set, and all its apparatus in active play; but *their* work is nearly done, and to their children and their children's children, they are saying, "Farewell; we shall soon land on the shores of immortality. We now commit to you the management of the ship. Man her well; store her liberally, and keep her in good and efficient repair."

Many of our youth already occupy respectable positions in society, and it may be that Providence will smile upon their dwellings, and bless them with considerable wealth. Let them "honour the Lord with" their "substance, and with the first-fruits of all" their "increase." Let them imbibe the spirit, and tread in the footsteps of their honoured parents, by whose liberality the several funds of the Church have been sustained for, perhaps, nearly half a century. Let them remember that, as one has said, "of great riches there is no real use, except in the distribution;" and again, that "riches have wings, and sometimes fly away of themselves, sometimes they must be set flying to bring in more." Giving will not impoverish them; withholding will not enrich them; for "there is that scattereth, and yet increaseth, and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty." Many of our youth we hope to see, ere long, occupying the offices of Circuit or Society stewards and of treasurers to our several funds; nor will any of them, we trust, when urged to take such honourable posts, be unwilling, especially on pecuniary grounds, to comply.*

Others of our youth have not the means, and may never have, to give largely to the cause of God; and many of them, we doubt not, often regret this. But let them bear in mind that "it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not." In a valley not far from our dwelling there is a monster water-wheel, by which the greater part of the machinery of an extensive worsted-mill is kept in motion. The stream that turns this wheel is fed not only by one or

* By no means, however, should a Christian's liberality be confined to his own religious denomination. He should cultivate a Catholic spirit, and be willing, if he has it in his power, to aid in every noble enterprise, by whatever Church or Society it is managed.

two considerable torrents, but also by a number of little rivulets, each of which empties its portion of water into the general reservoir. Does the monster wheel despise the offerings of the little rivulets and tell them that they may keep their insignificant drops to themselves? By no means. It is as glad of their contributions as of those of the larger brooks; and in like manner the Church accepts with joy the offerings of the poor as well as of the rich; and in some cases the former, like the widow's two mites, are deemed deserving of the greater praise.

Let our young people of all classes cultivate a spirit of Christian liberality; and let them willingly support, as far as their means will permit, the ministers of the Gospel, Day and Sabbath Schools, Home and Foreign Missions, and other enterprises of love and mercy. With respect to foreign Missions, many, who cannot contribute much themselves, are already engaged as active collectors; and, to the honour of our children we record it, *they alone* have raised for this cause, by the Christmas collecting cards in the course of eighteen years, the large and noble sum of upwards of 88,000*l.*, whilst a considerable portion of the annual income of our Missionary Society comes from the Juvenile Missionary Associations of our towns and cities. Here, then, is a field of usefulness open to our youth of both sexes, which must, and, we doubt not, will be, occupied from year to year, with all the ardour and devotedness which have characterized the past. Who will not aspire to take part in a work so great and glorious? Attended it often is with considerable discouragement, for the missionary collector comes in contact with all sorts of people—some kind and liberal, but others uncivil and penurious. Perseverance and prayer will, however, accomplish great things, and

many, who had but little courage when first they entered on this work, so that they could scarcely bear the denials and the frowns they met with, have become, ere long, as bold as the lion, whilst they have retained the innocence and gentleness of the dove. "To beg I am ashamed," said one; but none need to be ashamed to beg for the cause of Christ and of a world perishing for lack of knowledge. There is nothing sordid in such a work as this, nothing dishonourable, nothing mean or low. It is a work for which even princes might leave their palaces, and kings their thrones, and which would confer upon them greater dignity than all the titles of which they make their boast.

There are other departments of honourable service in the Church which our youth have in prospect. Some of them will doubtless become class-leaders, local preachers, or teachers and managers of Sunday-schools. In this last field many of them are already engaged, for it is one of a most inviting character, and one in which youthful talents may be exercised with considerable advantage. We may compare Sabbath-schools to little garden-plots, in which a variety of beautiful flowers are cultivated, and in which, under the guidance of skilful florists, the young admirer of the works of God may be employed in the culture of the different plants. The office of a Sunday-school teacher is far more important and responsible than some who sustain it appear to think. There are not a few, we fear, who profess to be teachers, but who take little or no pains to qualify themselves for their work; who never so much as look at the lessons of the Sabbath during the previous week, and who go and meet their scholars (possessed though they are of immortal minds longing to be fed with heavenly manna) utterly unprepared to explain to them intelli-

gently the chapters they are about to read. Aim, young people, at a high standard of excellence in the work of Sabbath-school teaching. Think not that, because you have only to instruct a few poor children, your task is not worth the trouble of preparation, but try to do your best; and, to render yourselves as efficient for your work as possible, spend a little time now and then in the careful study of the appointed lessons, and in earnest prayer to God. Worthy of your imitation is the conduct of John Mackintosh, a young man who intended, had he been spared, to enter the ministry of the Free Church of Scotland, and who, when a student at Cambridge, taught a class in a Sabbath-school. "It is interesting to notice," says his biographer, "his care for his Sabbath-class. He visited the children in their houses. He prepared the lessons carefully which he was to teach, and prayed earnestly for those who were to be taught. 'Taught school,' he writes one Sabbath evening, 'without much comfort; children ill-prepared and inattentive. May not this be traced to my own remissness in prayer for them? I devote an hour for this on Sunday morning, yet too often allow it to be curtailed. May the Lord fill me with more concern for their immortal souls, and more zeal in his behalf who loves little children.' " *

An hour on the Sabbath morning for prayer on behalf of his class! What would our Sabbath-schools become if every teacher were to adopt a rule like this, and to prepare himself, by the careful reading and study of the Scriptures, using such helps as are now accessible to all, to interest and to instruct the children that gather round him? We have not space to dwell on this subject

* "The Earnest Student," by the Rev. N. Macleod, D.D.

as we could wish; but we do not hesitate to say that pious, disinterested, and thoroughly efficient Sabbath-school teachers are everywhere needed, and that there is scarcely any field of Christian usefulness in which the zeal and the talent of our young people can be employed with such advantage, both to themselves and others, as they can in this.

The position of day-school teachers, which some of our youth will be called to occupy, may be considered, in Christian schools at least, as one which combines *both the secular and the sacred*. The calling of such persons is therefore a most important one, and requires talents, piety, and learning of the highest order. Time was, indeed, when it was thought that any tyro in knowledge was fit to teach the young, and when the task was frequently committed to an aged village dame. But that period has gone by, and, now that we are beginning to understand what education means, qualifications for the office of a teacher are demanded, and that by all classes of the society, by Christian Churches, and by the Government of the country, of a superior kind. Bright are the prospects of our youth if they see before them a work so honourable as this; for though it may be an arduous work, and one which requires the exercise of much patience, skill, and perseverance, yet is it a work worthy of the noblest minds, for it is to train the rising generation in knowledge, virtue, and religion, and thus to fit them for citizenship on earth and for a blessed immortality in heaven. We rejoice that there is, and we trust there will continue to be, a considerable demand for teachers of both sexes, to be employed under the auspices of the Wesleyan Committee of Education; nor will there be wanting, we believe, either males or females who will consecrate their energies to the important work. A

goodly band has already been sent forth into the field ; others are in course of training in our noble Institution at Westminster ; and others again are on a lower step, as pupil-teachers in our numerous schools, who, if faithful in their present posts, will rise with advancing years, step by step, to the honourable position they see before them.

Now if any such, or similar prospects of usefulness in the Church, are opening to our youth, as opening they doubtless are, they will possess "a vantage-ground for doing good," which many of their forefathers might well have envied. To do good is the highest end of life, and is, moreover, a source of the highest pleasure. It is just the want of something to do, or the want of a disposition to do it, that makes many unhappy and discontented ; whilst, on the other hand, it is in the act of working for God, in some field or other of Christian usefulness, that the happiest moments of life are realized. Nor need we occupy some very prominent position in order to do good, or to taste the happiness of being thus employed. In walks of life hidden from the public view, and in acts of benevolence which make no noise in the world, may we pour comfort into many a troubled breast, and secure for ourselves unutterable satisfaction. A gentleman who was travelling in Russia, some few years ago, met with the Governor of the prison at Sparrow-hill, near Moscow, Dr. Haase, of whom he thus speaks :—"In a long, low room we found about twenty men, who had come the day before from the provinces. A movement took place on our entering, and the rattling chains grated harshly on the ear. A passing shade of pleasure lighted up the face of most as Dr. Haase passed amongst them, but was soon succeeded by a state of passive resignation. The blacksmith was in readiness with his tools,

and one by one the strong rivets flew from the shackles. I wish my powers could describe the expression of that kind man's face, as he sat, the type of the true philanthropist : there was something more than pleasure ; there was religion in every lineament ; his eyes were lighted with a holy fire, and around his lips played a smile of benevolent joy, such as I had never seen before."

Yet it was but a little temporary relief that he was affording to the wretched prisoners, for they were on their way to banishment in Siberia. And, could acts of this kind afford such pleasure to the mind of that philanthropist ? how much greater joy may those experience,—for how much greater good will they do,—who are engaged in knocking off the fetters of ignorance from the human mind, or of administering spiritual instruction to those who are in distress and grief ! And this is the work, at least in prospect, of many of our intelligent youth. Let them enter on it with joy ; let them prosecute it with vigour ; let them perform it with untiring zeal.

But spheres of usefulness are in prospect to some of our youth which will require them to abandon all secular pursuits and to devote themselves wholly to the service of the Church. Already, perhaps, they begin to hear the voice of God say, " Whom shall I send, and who will go for us ? " and their convictions are already strong that a dispensation of the Gospel is committed unto them, and that at home or abroad—wherever Providence and the Church may direct—they will have to spend their lives in proclaiming Christ to men. Now whilst we would by no means encourage young men to be dissatisfied with other spheres of usefulness, or to aspire to the Christian ministry, ere the Spirit calls them to the work ; yet, on the other hand, we would urge them not to disregard the call if given, but to listen, even to its softest

whispers, and to watch the openings of Providence which indicate the path of duty. If God has work for you to do, He will call you to that work, and if He calls it is at your peril that you disobey. Leave, you must, the counting-house, the market, and the hall of commerce, however profitable they may be; ay, and the social circle, and the comforts of home, and even your fatherland itself, with all its fond attachments and its dear delights, to bear the torch of truth, if Christ requires you, into regions far remote.

Methodism is pre-eminently missionary. Her aggressive spirit is her glory; and she retains it to this day in all its vigour and its strength. She is now re-commencing, as it were, her mission to the masses of our home population, and is desirous to penetrate the large towns and cities of the land with an agency that shall carry the Gospel to the doors of the most neglected of society. Who will devote themselves to the self-denying but honourable work of evangelizing the heathen of London, Manchester, and Liverpool, who in countless numbers present themselves in the streets and lanes of those cities, saying, by their very looks, "No man careth for our souls?" Where are the young men who, instead of occupying the pulpits of our beautiful chapels, will, for a few years at least, be content to preach in cottages, in garrets, at the corners of the streets, on the quays, and in the market-places; and, for the sake of winning souls to Christ, brave toil, and danger, and even obloquy and rebuke, in the arduous enterprise? Oh! it is time that the Churches were aroused to a deeper sense of the importance of this work; for we have but to look at the statistics of crime in this country to be convinced that, after all, ignorance and vice are fearfully predominant in the land, and that

annually vast thousands within our immediate reach are passing into eternity unprepared to die. Let our young men ponder this subject deeply. Let them make themselves so fully acquainted with it that it may stir their spirits to their depths, and compel them to say, "Lord, here we are; send us." Many of them *will* do it. Methodism will not want agents for this department of her work. God is already laying His hand upon a few; and a noble army of home-missionary labourers will, we trust, be in the field ere long.*

But the field is the world. All, therefore, cannot

* I subjoin the following appeal to young men, from the "Occasional Paper" for May, 1858, of the Committee on Wesleyan Home Missions:—"Let us be permitted, in this paper, earnestly to invite young ministers to offer for this work. We want volunteers. Many of the noblest spirits among our younger ministers, from year to year have delighted to volunteer for the foreign mission-work, being ready, for Christ's sake, to 'jeopardy their lives in the high places of the field.' Now, who will come forward for *this* work? Where is the young man, ready, for a few years, to toil manfully, that he may be separated from the more regular pastoral work, and be a missionary to his own countrymen? Britain's glens need yet to be pierced, in many a direction, by willing and dauntless labourers, who, knapsack on shoulder, will pioneer the way for more settled ministrations. The scattered villages and the towns of the west and south must hear their quiet ways echo with the voice of the preacher; at the country fair or market he must take his stand on the skirts of the crowd, or under the shadow of the market-cross, to preach Christ to those who, up to this very day, have, in many instances, not even had the opportunity of hearing the Gospel of salvation by grace. And, in our large and crowded towns, the alienated labourer and the hapless British pariah must be visited from house to house. The gloomy cellar must be penetrated; the remote alley be explored; the reeking one room entered, and its crowd of sordid and squalid tenants told of hope and a Saviour, of sin and hell, of holiness and heaven. Shall a woman set the example, and young men of Methodism not be ready to go after her, that, if possible, they may exceed her in service and success? Surely what Miss Marsh did for the 'navvies' at Beckenham, many a young man will yearn to do for all the outcast whom he may be able to reach!"

remain at home, many as its claims and wants may be. The outlying territories of heathenism must be visited. Some of our youth must give themselves for high and noble emprise on the plains of Hindoostan, in the wilds of Africa, or amid the Islands of the Southern Seas. Never were louder calls made upon the Church to attempt the evangelization of the world, than now; never were more numerous doors of usefulness thrown open; and never was there such a demand for men of enterprise, talent, piety, and zeal for foreign missionary toil. There is British India, now in a higher sense British than it has ever been, because placed immediately under the sceptre of our Queen, where, alas! calamities have been witnessed, sufferings endured, and atrocities perpetrated, in connexion with the revolt of the native troops, at which the world has stood aghast; and where idolatry, in its most degrading and demoralizing forms, yet holds dominion over 200,000,000 of human beings. There is China, with a population still larger, in the same moral and religious condition, now, by a series of remarkable providences, thrown open to the evangelical operations of the Church, and presenting such a field for missionary enterprise as will require more labourers (humanly speaking) than all Christendom can furnish in the next century. There is Central Africa, where the indefatigable Livingstone has already planted the seeds of British commerce and of Christian truth, and where vast tribes of men whose existence, until recently, was not even known, are, to some extent, ready to receive the messengers of the cross with friendly feelings and an attentive ear. Oh, it is wondrous how the heathen world is being thrown open to the Christian Church! It is as when the Israelites had encompassed Jericho,—as when the armed men and the priests bearing the ark and

blowing the trumpets, having gone round the walls seven days, the walls fell down flat before them, and the people rushed in and took possession of the city. The Church has been going round and round the walls of heathendom, but, with a few exceptions, it has been hitherto compelled to keep upon the outskirts; now, however, the walls are falling, in various directions;—there are breaches here, and openings yonder, and a voice is heard, saying to the Church, “Shout, for the Lord hath given you the city!”

Young men of Methodism, we want valiant soldiers of the cross,—men who count not their lives dear unto them,—to enter these openings, and to carry the standard of the cross, and plant it upon heights where it has never yet waved. “Who will consecrate his services this day unto the Lord?” Would you win renown as heroes? You will find no wider field for the exercise of a truly heroic spirit than this. It is a battle-field more glorious than Inkerman or Delhi, and it can tell of heroes equal in every respect to the greatest warriors whose names are enrolled in the pages of history, and whose monuments adorn the magnificent cathedrals of the land. Victories for Christ,—bloodless conquests over human hearts,—triumphs over error, superstition, and idolatry,—here you may gain them with abundant joy, and gaining them, they will prove your eternal recompence.

We know that the ties of country, home, and friends, are powerful; and we know that, in some instances, parents interfere, and are unwilling to give up their children for a work so hazardous. But if the Spirit of God rests upon a young man and calls him to the enterprise, go he must, or he will imperil his salvation, “for he that loveth father and mother more

than me," said Christ, "is not worthy of me;" whilst on another occasion He said, "There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the Gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life."

Twenty years ago we attended, in one of the chapels in London, a valedictory service of several missionaries, which we well remember to this day. Among those missionaries was a young man who had been for some time a student in the Theological Institution at Hoxton, but had now received an appointment to a distant part of the world, for which he was to sail in the course of a few days. His parents, who were not decidedly pious, had been unwilling to give him up to the work to which he had been called; and this he said had been his greatest grief. He had gone down into the country to bid them farewell, and had endeavoured to induce them to say, "You may go;" but this much, which, for their sakes as well as for his own, he was so anxious they should say, he had failed to extract from their lips. Duty was his, however, and he knew and felt that even the fond affection of a father and a mother must not interfere with the claims of Christ, and hence he had bidden them a painful adieu, and had returned to London to embark for his destination. That morning, however, the morning of the day on which this service was held, he had received from them a letter in which they gave expression to their tenderest regards for their son, but said that they could no longer withhold their consent, and that with it, and with their blessing, he might go. It was enough. His prayer had been heard; and now

his heart was comparatively light. He went, accompanied by several others of his companions and fellow-labourers, to dark, cannibal Feejee. That young man was John Hunt; and how he toiled and laboured in Feejee—what dangers he encountered, what difficulties he braved, what successes he experienced, our missionary records tell. And at length he died—died in the arms of his friend, Mr. Calvert, almost with his last breath praying, “O Lord, bless Feejee! Save the heathens in Feejee!”

Brief was his career, but bright and glorious. Oh for a host of such young men! Let our youth get baptized with the missionary spirit, and then, if they are summoned to the field, no ties of kindred, no love of home, no fear of danger will deter them from rushing into the midst of the battle. Nothing, however, but genuine piety,—piety the most ardent and sincere will qualify them for a work like this. In ancient Athens a spectacle was witnessed thrice a-year, which was called the torch-race. The competitors were youths. They lit their torches at the altar of Prometheus in the Ceramicus, and then with the utmost speed ran towards the city. He whose torch went out during the race gave place to the next, and the victory was to him who first reached the goal with his torch still lit. Your torches, young men, must be lit at the altar of the cross; and bearing them high, but holding them steadily, you must enter on your course: nor will they go out if you take with you a supply of the oil of grace, and gain, as you proceed, fresh supplies, by prayer and faith, but sooner or later you shall reach the goal, and to you shall be awarded a glorious victory.

That such are the prospects of some of our youth, and that these prospects will in many instances be

realized, we cannot doubt. In the distant perspective of some ten or fifteen years we see one or another whose eye now lights upon this page, bidding farewell to friends and home, stepping on board the missionary ship, planting his foot on the shores of Africa or the East, standing at the door of some idol temple, and proclaiming "an idol is nothing in the world;" and then on some page of a future missionary notice giving a narrative of his toils in the service of his Lord. Are you saying, "Lord, is it I?" Perhaps it is; but wait and see. Cherish the holy fire, if but a spark of it has been enkindled in your breast; give yourself to Christ and to His Church for whatever service you may be hereafter destined; and labour diligently in the sphere you already occupy for the glory of your Saviour's name.

Dr. Kitto, in his Daily Readings on Isaiah xlix. 21, says, "Twenty years ago, before 'the Lord caused me to wander from my father's house,' and from my native place, I put my mark upon this passage in Isaiah, 'I am the Lord: they shall not be ashamed that wait for Me.' Of the many books I now possess, the Bible that bears this mark is the only one that belonged to me at that time. It now lies before me; and I find that, although the hair which was then dark as night, has meanwhile become 'a sable silvered,' the ink which marked the text has grown into intensity of blackness as the time advanced, corresponding with, and in fact recording, the growing intensity of the conviction, that 'they shall not be ashamed that wait for thee.' I believed it then: but I know it now; and I can write *probatum est*, with my whole heart, over against the symbol which that mark is to me, of my ancient faith."

The writer can add his testimony to this precious truth. Thirty years ago he was cast upon the world

with no money, with but few friends, and with prospects as cheerless as they well could be. But he sought Divine counsel, and committed his way unto the Lord, and step by step he has been led hitherto, by a path not one foot of which he could then foresee. Let our youth take for their guide and friend the Lord of hosts, and He will open up their course, brighten their prospects, and direct their way; and honourably and usefully, though it may be in comparative obscurity from the world's rude gaze, they shall spend their days, and then rise to regions of eternal joy.

SECTION III.

PROSPECTS RELATING TO A FUTURE LIFE.

"Heavenward our path still goes,
Sojourners on earth we wander,
'Till we reach our blest repose,
In the land of Promise yonder :
Here we stay a pilgrim band,
There must be our fatherland."—SCHMOLEK.

WE must now ascend another mount, higher than the Alps, higher than the Andes, higher than the loftiest peak of the Himalayah ;—a mount which we can climb by faith only—the spiritual Pisgah, from which we may view "that goodly land," of which Canaan was a feeble type, and see its golden groves, its tree of life, its crystal river, and its sea of glass ; a sight more beautiful and glorious than the loftiest imagination can conceive.

Such a land there is, though it cannot be discerned by eyes of flesh. The range of man's vision is very limited, so that there may be, and doubtless are, in the vast regions of space, worlds unnumbered which he cannot see, even with the aid of the most powerful telescope his ingenuity can construct. But a few years ago the existence of one of the planets of the solar system was unknown ; but an astronomer having conceived that it did exist, and having calculated where, or in what part of the heavens it would be at a certain time, directed his

telescope to the point, and there beheld it shining on its way. Who then will doubt, because he cannot see it, that there is, somewhere in the vast bounds of space, another world such as the sacred Scriptures describe—a world of light, and happiness, and joy, inhabited only by the pure and spotless, and the special residence of God himself? The Christian does not doubt it; but exults in hope that he shall one day see it, that he shall one day enter it, that he shall one day dwell within its radiant light; and of all the prospects that are before him there are none to be compared with this.

To the young, heaven, eternity, a future state, often appear distant in relation to time as well as space; and if they think of them at all, they think of them as far away, at the end of their earthly sojourn, which they fancy will be extended some forty, fifty, or sixty years. Yet even this is a brief period—a mere point in the countless years of duration, and many of them do not live half so long, nay, many of them die ere yet they arrive at manhood's prime. Death, indeed, claims as his prey, in many instances, the infant that has just budded into life, and the child that has just begun to step with buoyant foot across the floor; whilst youth in all its stages falls beneath his scythe, and withers at his touch. I knew a young man many years ago, "the only son of his mother, and she was a widow," possessed of a charming voice for singing, and of considerable musical talents which he had cultivated with great care; who, just as he was entering into public life, and just as his widowed mother anticipated his occupying an honourable and lucrative position in the world, was smitten with disease, and laid prostrate on a bed of languishing and pain. I used to visit him almost every day, and sometimes he would express a hope that he should recover, and would talk

of the prospects which were opening before him. But he was resigned to the will of God, for he had sought and found the pearl of great price, and when he saw that there was no probability of his being raised up, he ceased conversing about this life, and would speak only about God and Heaven. I saw him die,—calmly, sweetly, triumphantly, for death had lost its sting, and his spirit passed away to join in the music of the skies.

I knew another, much more recently, who had entered on a course of study for the Christian ministry, and who gave promise of becoming a devoted and successful herald of the Cross. But he took a severe cold, consumption seized him as its prey, and slowly but surely that insidious complaint wasted his youthful strength and vigour. For four long years he was confined to his room, often suffering great pain, but patiently submissive to his Saviour's will. Having few friends around him, and not being able to read much, his solitude was cheered a little by the singing of some birds which a kind brother had procured for him, and placed in cages within his chamber. Emblems were these little birds of his own spirit, which, though happy, often longed to escape from its confinement, and to tower away and be at rest; and at length the moment of deliverance came, the tottering tabernacle fell, and the captive entered into liberty and light.

But instances of this kind might be adduced without number, for they are occurring around us almost every day. Though we have addressed you, then, in the preceding pages, on your prospects in relation to society and the Church, yet it is possible that such prospects may not be realized,—that, ere long, sickness may cast a veil over them all,—that you are already marked for an

early grave. What then? Ought you to be gloomy, sad, and melancholy? Surely not, if you are Christians; for then there are prospects before you brighter, fairer, lovelier than any which this life can open to your view,—prospects which (unlike those of earth that look enchanting in the distance, but fade as you come nearer them) will be realized in more than all the glory with which your fancy can invest them. To some of these we will direct your thoughts.

There is, first, *the prospect of a reunion with departed Christian friends*. Some years ago, when slavery was sanctioned by the British Crown, a father and his son, who were slaves, were sold by their master to different purchasers. They were thus torn away from each other's society, and taken so far distant from each other that they had no hope of ever meeting in this world any more. But time rolled on; the act of emancipation came into operation, and then they were free. They both journeyed to the same town; and one Sabbath morning both went to the same place of worship. Years had made a great change in their appearance. The father had become a grey-headed old man, the son had lost the freshness and vivacity of youth. But they saw each other, and the son thought to himself, "Surely that is my father." In a few moments he approached him; a single word was enough to assure him that it was even so, and joyous beyond all conception was the meeting that day of the long-separated father and son.

And think you not that you will recognize your sainted friends in heaven? On this subject—the recognition of one another in our Father's home—volumes have been written. It has been a hope entertained by the Church through all ages; poets have sung of it,

ministers have preached on it, and the holiest men have exulted in the thought of it. An eminent living writer says:—"I see no reason why those who have been dearest friends on earth should not, when admitted to that happy state, continue to be so, with full knowledge and recollection of their former friendship. If a man is still to continue (as there is every reason to suppose) a social being, and capable of friendship, it seems contrary to all probability that he should cast off or forget his former friends, who are partakers with him of the like exaltation. *He* will indeed be greatly changed from what he was on earth, and unfitted, perhaps, for friendship with such a being as one of us is *now*; but his friend will have undergone (by supposition) a corresponding change. And as we have seen those who have been loving play-fellows in childhood grow up, if they grow up with good, and with like dispositions, into still closer friendship in riper years, so also it is probable that when *this* our *state of childhood* shall be perfected in the maturity of a better world, the like attachment will continue between those companions who have trod together the Christian path to glory, and have taken sweet counsel together, and walked to the house of God as friends."

No wonder, then, that one who had buried a lovely child should pour forth his feelings in such strains as these:—

"A little while—a little while—

Ah! long it cannot be!

And thou again on us wilt smile,

Where angels smile on thee.

How selfish is this worldly heart!

How sinful to deplore!

Oh, that we were where now thou art,

Not lost, but gone before!"

"Delta," as he signed himself,* the writer of these lines, has doubtless realized his wish, and has been re-united to his child in the glorious Paradise of God. And prospects such as these are before you, dear reader, if you are a Christian youth. Sooner or later you will be re-united to that fond father who gave you counsel, to that tender mother who so often watched over you in sickness, to those affectionate brothers and sisters in whose society you spent so many pleasant hours, but who, it may be, have preceded you to the world of light; and you shall tread with them the golden streets of the New Jerusalem, and pluck with them the fruit of the tree of life, and drink with them of the river of the water of life, and sing with them the song of Moses and the Lamb. "We shall meet again," said a pious mother to her son, as she bade him farewell on his departure as a missionary to a distant land. They never met again on earth, for soon after she finished her course with joy; and a few years later he died upon a foreign shore: but her words were doubtless true, and her hope was doubtless realized. They met again on the heavenly plains, to be separated no more for ever; and there such meetings are constantly taking place, so that the joy of angels is perhaps increased in witnessing the reunions of long-divided friends. O, blessed prospect! What is there on earth with which we can compare it? The soldier returning from the battlefield; the mariner casting anchor in his native port; the benighted traveller who sees at length the glimmering light of his cottage-home; exults in the thought that in a few moments more he shall clasp in his embrace the beloved ones whom he has not seen for many weeks;

* David Macbeth Moir.

but what is this in comparison with the Christian's hope of being ere long conducted by angelic spirits to his heavenly home, there to see the friends and the companions of his early days whom death had robbed him of, and whose remains he had followed to the silent tomb? O dwell, dear youth, upon the prospect, and let it cheer you in your solitude, if in solitude you are, and let it urge you to prosecute your heavenward way!

There is *the prospect of seeing the great and good of other ages and of other lands*, whom we have never personally known on earth, but whom we shall doubtless know in heaven. Seldom do we hear of the fame, or see the productions, or read the writings of an eminent individual, but we conceive a wish to see him. Who has not conceived such a wish with respect to the patriarchs, the prophets, the apostles, and the martyrs, of former ages of the Church, and thought what a privilege it would be to hold converse with them, and to hear from their own lips something of their eventful histories? Can it be doubted that this desire will be realized in the heavenly world? If on the Mount of Transfiguration Moses and Elijah appeared together and conversed with Jesus, though they lived in éras of the world's history five hundred and ninety years apart, will not all the people of God, from the earliest to the latest times, become acquainted one with another in the life to come? The inference is, at least, a highly probable one; and it is as pleasing as it is probable, and is one feature in the prospect before the Christian which may be contemplated with delight and joy.

And what a long line of worthies rises before the eye of the mind as we dwell upon this thought! In the heavenly world you will see Adam, "the progenitor of mankind;" and Eve, "the mother of all living;" and Noah,

"the preacher of righteousness;" and Abraham, "the friend of God." There you will see Moses, "the law-giver of Israel;" and Samuel, "a prophet of the Lord;" and David, "the shepherd king;" and Isaiah, "the enraptured seer;" and Daniel, "the man greatly beloved." There you will see Mary, the mother of the Lord, and Peter, James, and John, with the rest of the apostles of the Lamb, including Paul, "the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles," though once "a persecutor and injurious." And there you will see the martyrs of the early Church, and the bold reformers of a later age, and the illustrious teachers who adorn its annals from the beginning of its history until now. And, besides all these, you will see thousands more whose names you have never heard, "of every nation, and kindred, and people, and tongue;" many of whom have no place in the records of the Church on earth, but who fought and conquered under the banner of the Cross, and were counted worthy of the victor's crown. All these you will see,—a multitude that no man can number; and, in addition to these, the holy angels, who were your ministering spirits, and who, though not of man's race, were created by the same God, and are members of His one great family above.

And will it not be unspeakably blessed to hold communion with these glorious beings, all holy and spotless as they are,—the angels having never sinned, and the redeemed from off the earth having washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb? What mysteries they will explain to us! What revelations they will make! What conflicts and what victories will they tell us of and describe! As when soldiers, after a long and dangerous war, having arrived at home from the seat of conflict, love to meet and tell one another of the wounds

they received and the perils they escaped, so, we can imagine, will the soldiers of the cross, when the battle is over and the victory is won, and when they meet in that home where the din of strife is never heard, recount, to the glory of the Captain of their Salvation, the conquests gained over sin and Satan and the world. For the song of the redeemed is called the song of Moses, the servant of God—that is, it is a song of victory, like that which was chanted by the hosts of Israel on the shores of the Red Sea after they had passed through its divided waters and their enemies had been overwhelmed in the returning tide. That song, says one whom we have before quoted, “was a type of all the psalms which have been sung on earth since,”* and it was a type of the final song which the triumphant Church shall chant before the throne of God. From myriads of voices, but in one language and in perfect harmony, shall that ancient battle-song peal over the sea of glass mingled with fire, and through eternity shall the countless hosts repeat, “Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed : thou hast guided them in thy strength to thy holy habitation.”

Nor must we forget that the great family in heaven is one—one in mind, one in spirit, one in name. We have addressed you, in the preceding pages, in relation to your membership with a certain section of the Church of Christ ; but in that glorious state of which we now speak the Church has no sections, but is distinguished for its unity, its oneness, and its harmony. *Here*, where mists and vapours obscure the vision of God's people, they see things differently and in different lights, and “knowing” but “in part,” their views are frequently conflicting, and,

* “The Voice of Christian Life in Song,” pages 5 and 296.

almost as a natural consequence, their love for one another is often cold. But *there* all dimness and obscurity will be done away; truth will be presented to their minds in a light surpassing that of the mid-day sun; they will "know even as also they are known;" and hence they will be one both in judgment and affection, and will all be subject to one common Head and Lord. There will be no walls of partition there, no denominational titles there, no sectarian prejudices there. The names to which we attach so much importance here—Episcopalian, Wesleyan, Baptist, and Independent, will be there unknown, for they will all be lost in the one name, Christian—the new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name. The triumphant Church will doubtless incorporate thousands of all sections of the militant Church; but the names of their respective leaders and commanders will then be laid aside, and they will all rejoice in the one common bond of brotherhood which will bind them together—the bond of love to their Saviour, Lord, and King. Is not this a gladdening thought? is not this a cheering prospect? Let us, then, now cultivate towards our Christian brethren of every name the "charity" which "hopeth all things;" and let us anticipate the day when we shall hold fellowship with them in the realms of immortality and light. Many young people form intimate associations with persons not of their own community, and sometimes they regret that their views are different, and would rejoice if their opinions were in perfect harmony. Well, the day shall come when their desires will be fulfilled, for in their Father's house they will see eye to eye, and will be united for ever by the closest ties.

There is *the prospect of beholding Jesus himself and of dwelling for ever in his immediate presence.* An ancient

historian tells us that when Cyrus, King of Persia, entered Armenia, one talked of his wisdom, another of his resolution, another of his mildness; and some of his beauty and the height of his stature; but that a certain female being asked what she thought of him, replied, "I did not look at him, for I was looking at the man who said he would pay the price of his life to redeem me from slavery." Did this female think so much of one who had but promised to die for her, that even a monarch's splendour could not draw away her attention from him? What, then, must the Christian think of Him who actually laid down his life for the redemption of the world? Oh! in the believer's estimation Jesus is "the fairest among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely," and to see Him, and be with Him, is his highest ambition and desire. Even heaven itself has no object so glorious as the Lamb that was slain, for He is its light and the source of all its joys, so that when the spirit is set free from its earthly tenement and enters the land that is very far off, it will pass by the ranks of angels and of the redeemed, that it may behold "the King in his beauty," and present its homage at his feet.

This brightest of all prospects is before you, dear reader. "We shall see Him as He is," says the beloved disciple. "As He *is*,"—not as He *was*,—in the wilderness of temptation—in the garden of agony—on the cross of shame; but "*as He is*,"—the God-man, in his majesty and glory, with many crowns upon his head, and his countenance as the sun shineth in his strength.

We shall see Him in our disembodied state, for to be "absent from the body" is to be "present with the Lord;" but we shall see Him also on the day of the resurrection, when He shall appear in the clouds of

heaven, and shall bid our dust come forth from the long, long silence of the grave.

"These eyes that dazzled now and weak
At glancing motes in sunshine wink,
Shall see the King's full glory break,
Nor from the blissful vision shrink :

"In fearless love and hope uncloy'd
For ever on that ocean bright
Empower'd to gaze; and undestroy'd
Deeper and deeper plunge in light."

And seeing Him we shall be "like Him,"—glorious as He is glorious, pure as He is pure, holy as He is holy; and being "like Him" we shall be placed at his right-hand, and ultimately conducted to the new Jerusalem, the walls of which are of jasper, and the city of pure gold, like unto glass, where we shall dwell with Him and with his saints FOR EVER.

But how faint are the conceptions we can form of prospects such as these! Were it not that they are presented to us in the page of inspiration we should think it impossible that creatures such as we are could ever attain to honour so great and to privileges so exalted. You are perhaps comparatively poor, and know what it is to endure affliction, to sustain sorrow, to contend with numerous trials and distresses. Your home, it may be, is a very humble one, and within the palaces of the rich and great you are never permitted to set foot. Never did you see royalty in its splendour, for your dwelling is among the sons of toil and suffering, where scenes of worldly pomp and glory never meet the eye. Yet you can see God's sun, an object more glorious than any upon which the courtiers of princes gaze; and, ere long, you shall see Him that made that sun, and in his bright presence shall exchange poverty for riches, sorrow for

joy, and a night of toil for an unclouded day of rest. O think, ye children of the poor, ye labourers in the field or in the mill, ye busy youth behind the counter, who so often long for shorter hours; think what it will be to bid adieu to care, and anxiety, and suffering, for ever,—to mingle with the spirits of the blest, to enter on the Sabbath of the skies, and to gaze with enraptured sight on the glorified humanity of the Son of God! Think of all this, and let the prospect cheer you; and, when you are downcast and dejected, stretch out the wings of faith and hope, and try to ascend this Pisgah mount, where visions such as these will pass before you; and will cause you to forget for awhile your toil.

There is, further, *the prospect of perpetual progress in knowledge, holiness, and blessedness, without limit and without end.* What shall we be? and how shall we be employed in heaven? are questions which have occupied the thoughts of some of the greatest minds; but who can answer them? "*It doth not yet appear what we shall be.*" A few faint beams of light, and no more, are all that are granted us on our future condition;—the rest eternity must reveal.

Yet these few faint beams should be carefully observed; for they reveal to us some things of momentous interest. They tell us, for example, that **WE SHALL BE—that WE SHALL EXIST, and that FOR EVER.** There is no doubt, no uncertainty, on this point; and how solemn a reflection it is! Think, dear reader, that *you*, the individual *you*, you yourself, will never cease to be, but, in some state or other, of happiness or misery, of bliss or woe, will be living, in perfect consciousness of your own identity, when ages, millions of ages, and millions of ages after them, will have passed away! And you will carry with you into that eternal state the character that

you form in this. Essentially you will be the same person, possessing the same tempers, dispositions, and affections then, that you do now, or will do when you are called to quit this lower state. Nor can it be doubted that, if you reach the heaven prepared for you, you will enter, with new powers and expanded faculties, on employments the most noble, elevated, and glorious, which will lead you upwards, through eternity, to the infinite and blessed God.

For "can we believe," asks one, "that the precious and costly fruits of a long and painful culture, in the present state, are all to fall to the earth and perish, just as they are ripened?" No; we are here, in a training school, for a higher and more exalted state of being, and the lessons we learn here we shall have to practise there; the great principles of duty which are here implanted in our minds, we shall there carry out in more active operation. A vast field of action will, doubtless, be there presented before us, and not in "recollections of labour, anthems of praise, and inert repose," shall we spend eternity; but in studying the works and ways of God, in performing, as do the angels now, his blessed will, and, perhaps, in accomplishing tasks, in comparison with which those we have to accomplish now are but like playing with pebbles on the ocean's shore. That a flood of light will be let in upon our minds the moment we enter the spirit-land, no one can doubt, but that we shall know everything at once, is quite improbable, nay, impossible; for then we should become like God Himself! Gradually, then, and through vast cycles of duration, will the mysteries of providence and grace be unfolded to our enraptured minds, whilst every fresh discovery of the infinite perfections of the Creator will awaken fresh enjoyment, gratitude, and praise.

What prospects, then, are here ! Perhaps the reader's lot is one of almost unremitting toil and care ; but, possessing a superior mind, he often longs for leisure to inquire into those sublime and glorious truths which, though dimly, are presented to his mind. Let him not be discouraged. God has not given him capacities never to be filled. In eternity, if not in time, he will have the means of gratifying his utmost wishes ; and how high in knowledge, wisdom, blessedness, and glory, he will one day rise, is beyond the calculations of the wisest of mankind. It is not presumption, however, to suppose that the redeemed will hereafter gain the intelligence possessed by angels now, and that, though there will ever be orders and ranks of heavenly beings, the lowest will attain the position of the highest, whilst they again will have risen higher still.

These thoughts, however, are more than we can grasp, and even in giving expression to them their weight oppresses us. " Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." Lest, then, we should speculate on what is not revealed, we will not further pursue the theme ; but, in view of these prospects relating to the heavenly world, will ask our readers whether they have, indeed, a hope of realizing them, —whether they possess a title to the inheritance of the saints in light, and whether, should their youth be nipped in the bud by the ruthless hand of death, their Saviour would transplant them in the paradise above ?

We should like to meet our youth in heaven. We should like to see those for whom so many prayers have been offered, so many tears shed, so many efforts made, and so many sacrifices offered, safely lodged in their Father's house. But it is a holy place. " THERE

SHALL IN NO WISE ENTER INTO IT ANYTHING THAT DEFILETH, NEITHER WHATSOEVER WORKETH ABOMINATION OR MAKETH A LIE; BUT THEY THAT ARE WRITTEN IN THE LAMB'S BOOK OF LIFE." And the fearful alternative of exclusion from heaven is eternal death,—“the worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched.” If you fail to realize the bright prospects on which we have dwelt, your prospects will be more gloomy and more terrible than human language can describe, for your doom will be with “the fearful, and the unbelieving, and the abominable,” in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.

As I take my farewell of you, dear youthful reader, let me entreat you to ponder these things. Go into your closet; open your Bible; bow down in earnest prayer, and ask God to give you a knowledge of yourself, a knowledge of your guilt and sin, a knowledge of your interest in Christ's death and sacrifice, and a knowledge of the path that leads to immortality. And oh! make it the one great business of your life to secure those holy and heavenly dispositions which will fit you for the society of the redeemed, and for the presence of your God and Saviour. There is a crown of life for you; a place before the throne for you; a palm of victory for you. Contend for them manfully, courageously, perseveringly, and, by the grace of God, you shall join the disembodied hosts, and shall dwell with Jesus and his redeemed FOR EVER.



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